One Dad’s Notes

Second Edition

March 28, 2026

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Psychology and spirituality share a tighter connection than we might think.

Introduction

Most of these notes are psychology-based and spirituality-based reflections, written down with the ultimate goal of helping others.

The first edition was copyrighted in 2021, but this second edition is like night and day from the first. Most everything has been significantly revised, and there’s a lot of new material. I would recommend not even reading the first edition.

Since my 20’s, I’ve kept notes on various ideas that have popped into my head. By my early 40’s, I had typed up some of these ideas, and conveyed them to my *young* children, with hopes it would help them and maybe some other kids as well. That previous work was called “Dad’s School of Life”. Then as the years went by, more notes accumulated and were transferred into this present work. Many of these notes are ideas I have discussed with my *older* children, through the years.

It’s likely that people throughout history have already thought of all the ideas in this work. I’ve read things by various authors and found some nearly identical ideas to those that I had written about previously. But my main hope is that the particular wording in One Dad’s Notes might help the reader’s light bulb to come on in ways that it might not have otherwise.

In some notes I refer to God as a "Higher Power". This is because I have posted some of these articles online. There are a lot of people out there who are not Christians but wonder about a higher power, and talking about God, Jesus, and Christianity immediately alienates many of them. They quit reading, never to return.

Instead, I hope to first show them how a certain higher power can operate in the mind. And upon further exploration into human nature, they may begin to feel the need for a higher power who forgives them for everything, based on this higher power making a sacrifice for them. In turn, a great gratitude for this gift may well up in their hearts.

If readers explore further, they will find that Christianity is the only faith that is based on this total forgiveness coming from faith alone, while other faiths involve meeting uncertain benchmarks for deeds or spiritual alignment, so believers are never sure if they have "done enough."

Are my ideas any better than anyone else's? Probably not. It's just that I chose to type them up, and put some of them online. I'm convinced that if more people put more tools and materials on the psychological-spiritual table, more psychological-spiritual bridges would get built.

Web Access

As of the date noted above, some of these notes are available at www.onedadsnotes.substack.com. But in the near future I'm planning on uploading this 2nd Edition to www.archive.org in their general digital library, as well as to www.permanent.org. After this, the 3rd Edition will begin as the adding and editing gradually continue.

The Process of Writing

Time is a fundamental dimension in the laws of physics, and I have not yet figured out a workaround. Also, time transmutes as you get older – it gets increasingly rare and turns into gold.

Due to a lack of this precious substance, I never saw a pathway to putting these ideas into a flowing book form. Instead, most of them remain in article format, loosely categorized into chapters.

There were several hours most every day where I could have thrown some more work into this document. But I consciously made the decision to spend more time engaging with family, including playing with the littlest family member, our pet dog.

Categorizing the articles was the hardest part. There was an effort to place the similar ideas together, under their own chapters (kind of like putting all the tools in the garage, all the paperclips in the desk, and all the ketchup packets in the pantry, to avoid ending up with the proverbial "junk drawer"). However, most ideas contained two or more chapter-worthy concepts, which made it more difficult to decide where they should go.

Other concepts are peppered throughout, not really rising to the level of having chapters of their own. Some concepts such as Forgiveness, Forethought, Altruism, Extremes, Accumulation, and Compassion might do well to have their own chapters, but the chore of organizing that, has not yet materialized.

Also, an idea might occur from different angles at different times, leading into the writing of another article with different wording for the same idea. So there is a bit of repetition, which I hope to comb out eventually. This is a continually evolving document.

If you don't see a date after a note, it was likely written somewhere between 2010 and 2019. Toward the end of the 20-teens, I started attaching dates. Some articles have been revised, so they might have two dates. When this is the case, I bold printed the date on which most of the idea became congealed.

A.i.

On 12/25/25 my family gave me an amusing book that listed me as the author on the front. The book was "Cracker Barrel Cuisine Critique". My wife tells me she answered a few questions online, & then apparently a.i. used her answers to make some personalized adjustments to this generic book, which then is used as a Christmas gift for Cracker Barrel restaurant fans nationwide. Thumbing through it, it appears to be a Cracker Barrel ad in book form.

I've already looked into having some a.i. assistance converting One Dad's Notes into a book to help shake out

some of the aforementioned repetition, locate any inconsistencies, and maybe get a flow going, but am currently still editing & adding ideas.

One of my hopes though is that after I've left this world, someone might upload One Dad's Notes into a conversational a.i., and have a conversation with a synthetic "me" about the topics herein. If it comes up with any eye-rolling Dad jokes in the process, it might be somewhat of an accurate rendition.

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Adversity

Extremes

Definitions and assumptions change over the years, but the overriding question that no one discusses is: How far is too far, in order to maintain a civil society? History should be our guide but unfortunately those who get easily sidetracked during relatively easy times, are the same individuals that have a mindset of ignoring history, or to think they are immune to it. So their definition of "too far" allows society to gradually break down, until the easy times disappear, and adversity returns to get their attention. This itself is a historical cycle in human nature that hardly anyone seems to understand.

Borrowing

It's not that the Small Picture Thinkers (SPT's) are better at sticking together and marketing their message. It's that their message is automatically appealing to an increasingly short-term thinking population. Unprecedented government Borrowing has given rise to the lack of real "poor nation" adversity that would have caused these susceptible people to start thinking long term.

Big Picture

If you are a big picture thinker (BPT), you will see that one of the greatest ironies is that adversity builds strength, and that in the U.S. today, we are actually promoting weakness by removing a healthy degree of adversity. As Frederick Douglass said, without struggle, there is no progress. However, another principle is that people are rationalizers, and will rationalize that they are struggling when in fact they have it very easy compared with people in other times and places. Another principle is that if you are struggling in the wrong direction, there is no progress. This can be cured by becoming a big picture thinker, but the willingness to do so is governed by emotion, and this involves a tangle of genetic and environmental factors, as research in the field of behavioral genetics is beginning to show. Yet another principle is that we must have a certain happy medium degree of conformity. We don't want to break people's spirits, unless they would be criminals otherwise. But with no conformity at all, there would be chaos, because as I recall from chemistry class, the second law of thermodynamics states that all systems tend toward a state of maximum disorder.

Guardians

Societies work to remove Adversity, to improve quality of life. But because of human nature, more people become more selfish when more Adversity is removed, which eventually leads to the return of Adversity. To avoid this, it would take a larger number of the population who somehow had an ability not to become selfish. How could we spot these potential Guardians in our midst? I would bet there have already been some psychological surveys and studies that may show certain personality characteristics that correlate with this selflessness.

Widespread, or Not

Lack of the right kind of adversity causes many people to forego the necessary time of focusing on things of widespread consequence. Or, it intoxicates them into believing they are focusing on widespread consequence, when they are not.

Tolerance

I think each of us has a tolerance range, that differs among us. In relatively easy times, many of us will tolerate more laziness and inaccuracy, and this ultimately leads to the ruination of the civil society, although during hard times, this mechanism can bring us together, tolerating our differences so we can pull together. So it appears our minds have not evolved to where we are able to continue having easy times for very long.

Honesty

When put in the position of "lie or lose your job" as is increasingly the case today in the U.S., we are forced to give up numerous opportunities for truth telling. And truth telling is one avenue of peace for the soul. This is one reason I think people who are not so afraid of losing their jobs for whatever reason, are more able to openly say what is on their minds. However, this is a double-edged sword, and may cut either way depending on who allows you to keep your job. But overall, I think the desire to be honest has fallen out of popularity because of the lack of "poor nation" type of adversity in the U.S.; adversity which would cause us to value honesty as gold. And we are no longer on the Gold Standard.

Spoiled or Thankful

When we are unwilling to look at the carrot, nature will eventually provide the stick. Of course, each situation is different and it's hard to know where to draw the line between carrot and stick. Its not like math where the line between 1 and 3 is 2. But that's why our brains are outfitted with an intuition, an imagination, and an "enough is enough" point. However, our "enough is enough" point has shifted due to a sly and surreptitious collective rationalization and thus our definition of what is *normal* has shifted as well. And many of us appear dimly aware of this shift, at best.

Normal striving: It's human nature that people get satisfaction from working for something (a) and working against something else (b). Thinking about Maslow's hierarchy, (a) could be food and (b) could be hunger.

But when (a) & (b) are pretty much taken care of without much worry, then the passionate striving force present in us all, shifts to the next important things to strive for and against.

These next things might be styles (of clothing, vehicles, homes, etc.), entertainment, and so on. There's nothing wrong with these things per se, but striving for them as if they are of number one importance, is a problem.

So it's really about how human nature responds to a society where there's no "level one Maslow adversity" to be reckoned with. Most all the physical needs are met with little or no fear of things like starvation, or hypothermia from lack of shelter.

Some people though are becoming tired of sitting on the wrong side of the proverbial fan. They believe that when there's a *lack* of some adversity, for example, widespread starvation, we can react to that lack by either becoming spoiled or becoming thankful.

To become thankful, we have to (1) remember and vividly imagine just how bad it was for the human beings that actually endured it, (2) look at the work of those who got us out of it, and (3) be vigilant that the work is not being gradually undermined under our noses.

Brain Cells
People are like neurons – communication between them ultimately results in an action taken by the overall organism. The overall organism here is the population. Now, maybe we have self-doubters in the population to somehow act as the internal self-monitors, to keep alive the specter of adversity in our imaginations, so that as a population, we won't be caught totally off guard when the actual adversity hits. (2017)

Economy and Mindset
Poor people in the U.S. in 2018 live like middle class people in many other countries. Here, most of the poor have cell phones, TV's, cars, and use hair and nail salons, compared to the billions of poor in many other countries. This is better than living in an extremely poor nation, but in many cases the adversity has been removed by government benefits, as opposed to hard work, so some people game the system, while others still choose to work hard. Those who game the system will vote for more of the same. Then, those who chose to work hard look over at them and say, "Jeez, I'm bustin' my butt out here and this guy's getting just as much as I am. I quit!" (2018)

476FLEE
Going above the atmospheric view and taking the orbital view, Carle Zimmerman's book "Family and Civilization" from 1947 provides a glimpse of the inevitable cycles in human society. After reading it, it appears to me now that there are so many otherwise intelligent people who are wasting their energy trying to fight these cycles in the wrong way. Ideally, we should instead realize that lack of adversity makes us weak and ripe for a fall, and retain the guardian attitudes we had when our society was growing stronger. However, most people will never realize this, so the falls will be inevitable. The best that the Realizers can do is to prepare for the fall. (Rome fell over many years but the most significant year was 476. I have toyed with the idea of getting a personalized car tag that says "476FLEE", but that would be a waste of money.) Before the covid19 virus, America had a relatively small number of Preppers but I think now their ranks will continue to increase. (4/28/20)

Human nature
Often, it's not within human nature for people to understand what's best for us in the long run. I am increasingly convinced that there is an epigenetic switch that is turned on in many people when there is long-term, widespread lack of "poor nation" type adversity. This switch turns on I believe in order to control population growth, and/or to keep people from becoming overconfident from too much success, and it causes them to work against the principles that got them into such a secure position in the first place. In other words, it causes them to fail, so adversity may return and make them think long-term, that they may become strong and smart again. (10/15/20)

Strength, part 1
As the old saying goes, "Adversity builds strength." But in the absence of adversity, you have to have a strong memory of adversity, and a vivid suspicion it could return. Otherwise, weakness ensues. (substack 1/15/23).

Strength, part 2
Unfortunately, most do not have memory this strong nor do they respect history well enough to imagine the grave adversity that previous generations endured. Alas therefore the human race is locked into this repeating cycle of the rise and fall of civilizations. (2023)

One Irony
Ironically, sometimes people create a culture they don't want to live in. I think this occurs when there are more short-term thinkers in a population. But the domino before this, is that people start thinking more short-term when decreasing adversity removes the need to think ahead and prepare for anything. (substack 2/24/23)

The Adversity Paradox

Lack of adversity can destroy a society. Yes paradoxically, that which we strive for, the removal of adversity, can destroy us. Many of us become spoiled, and some even subconsciously sabotage themselves to provide this innate desire to experience adversity, to have something intense to fight for, or against. We must first realize this narrative script is playing in our heads, in order to be able to give it up. We must step back and see the spoiling and self-sabotage as the real adversity we must fight against, since we appear to need adversity like we need oxygen. (This is why I had a t-shirt made that says "Adversity University".)

Adversity often brings out the best in us. As the old saying goes, adversity builds strength. Actually, adversity to a point, builds strength. And lack of adversity to a point, builds weakness and debt. But those points are difficult to determine, and vary from one person to another. (**2018**) (substack 3/1/23)

Testosterone

Adversity builds Testosterone. I think this is why the average male in the U.S. has shown a decreasing testosterone level in recent decades. There has been no sustained angering threat perceived in the mind of the average male that would cause him to throw off his security blanket and run shouting, headlong and exposed into heavy bullet fire. Science has shown that testosterone levels rise when men watch football for instance. Connecting the dots here is very simple. It affects the way people vote as well. (3/13/21)

WW2

Many of us have heard the overly simplistic notion that somehow, through the unprecedented military spending, World War 2 ultimately helped improve the U.S. economy. Instead, I believe that World War 2 reinvigorated morals in the minds of many, which in turn led to an increase in trustworthiness within the U.S., which in turn helped the economy. (3/1/22)

Go Wild

When people have a lot of pent-up aggression but no adversity to focus it on, their imaginations go wild. (1/5/23)

Infighting

People are born to fight for something, and against something else. And most people can agree to fight for the innocent. But increasingly we don't agree who the innocent are. Where there's a widespread lack of fear of bodily harm, or of food and shelter being lost, there's also a general lack of basic needs adversity. In this situation, people have their basic needs, so then they begin to define who is innocent based on preference. So the infighting begins, unless enough people agree that infighting eventually tears down the civilization. (3/24/23) (Touched on this idea in Substack 7/18/23)

Adversity is the Mother of Necessity

Someone on social media reminded me that we should sometimes see chores as necessities, which motivates us to cheerfully or dutifully complete the task, instead of being drained by the task. "I've got to do it, so I may as well make it pleasant." But I believe that further, a person needs to delve into the *reasons* that some things are not just chores, but necessary actions.

Necessary actions are ways of reducing adversity to a manageable level. For example, some people perceive the adversity that we will descend into chaos if we stop being civil to one another, so the necessary action becomes a striving to remain civil. Others perceive instead the adversity that being civil shows weakness, so their necessary action becomes a disruption of civility, using power to maintain their position of strength.

It depends on how each culture defines "strength", "adversity", and their preferred way of achieving it. But this touches on a theory that I'm not the first one to think of: Since adversity builds strength, then lack of adversity creates weakness.

Also, the wrong kind of adversity, such as that based on deception, creates strength that will be misused. For example, Hitler deceived many Germans into believing the Jews were adversaries. (4/9/23)

The Mistakes of Others

Unless forced by dire circumstances, some of us will continue to frivolously fritter away money, requiring

increased borrowing which eventually becomes unpayable, leading to the lender taking from us whatever we have left. Unbelievably, those who have done it will often blame someone else. Such is the nature of those who tend to refuse to learn from the mistakes of others. (Touched on this idea in Substack 4/25/23)

Word Bullies

Rates of child depression, anxiety & suicide are increased in the U.S. today. It's not bullying on social media, it's the importance kids place on social media. People were made to fight for something, and against something else. In this, people are made so that we feel strongly about something. Without any "poor-nation-type adversity" (fear of starvation, loss of shelter or life) to feel strongly about, we disproportionately amplify the lesser concerns into larger concerns. Hence, word-bullying grows from some words on a page, into a monster. And all it is, is perception. When I was a kid, we used to say "Sticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never hurt me." And we internalized it.

Parents have gotten away from the in-depth history-teaching of how tough life was 100 years ago, or tough even now in other parts of the world. People in these conditions know that a bunch of words don't mean anything unless they are backed up by either physical reality or personal faith.

Kids need adults who are serious about teaching them that unless we re-focus on physical reality and faith, things could easily turn on a dime and we could be back to those hard times.

However, when this is taught, it must be taught along with morality: that we can avoid hardship by fighting to protect the innocent. And in turn, we must define the innocent and their persecutors correctly, using evidence of physical reality, and not a bunch of words. We must regain the use of the old phrase, "Where's the evidence?" (2023) (Substack 5/28/23)

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Personality Conflict?

Are there certain personality types that you just don't seem to click with? Christopher Badcock (1) has described certain personality differences on a "mentalism or mechanism" scale, where a person can be closer to one, but farther from the other.

Badcock quotes other researchers, noting: "Mentalism refers to a cognitive style characterized by enhanced abilities in perspective taking, mentalizing (i.e. theory of mind), mindreading, and sensitivity to gaze (allowing efficient interpersonal interactions). Mechanism refers to a cognitive style characterized by enhanced abilities in perception, and attention to detail (allowing efficient interaction with the physical world)."

Mindreading vs. attention to detail? "Mindreading" here refers to a person's ability not to actually read minds, but instead an ability to pick up on very subtle social cues from other people, hence "allowing efficient social interactions". Of course, this can be a really great ability to have. People that are like this, can be accurate judges of character. Except that there are complications. There are many more facets to human personality. If these facets are balanced, you have a well-rounded person.

But here's where my own theory starts. Take this "mentalism" or "social cue reading" expertise facet, which by itself can be a good thing, and couple it with a "persecutory delusional disorder" facet, and you may end up with someone who not only believes they can read minds, but also that certain other people should be blamed for problems they had no hand in causing. This "persecuted mind-reader" combo may be rare, but you may have encountered one or more, depending on how long you've been around.

I will admit to being a little closer to the "mechanistic" side of this spectrum, meaning I have some "mentalistic" deficits: I'm a bit socially clumsy at times. I seem to be overly focused on the details of physical reality, often to the point of causing some occasional eye-rolling in others. But this focus on reality prevents me from suspecting that I am 100% right about what is going on in someone else's mind (although it may reach 99% at times). Reality has taught me to allow for my own human error, and I cannot escape from that lesson. In fact, I have often gone overboard, suspecting I could be wrong, and this has led to undue levels of guilt perception at times, or an overactive conscience. But through the decades, I've learned to get the ship steered back straight again without much difficulty.

As you may imagine however, I'm toward the opposite side of the spectrum from the rare but occasionally encountered "persecuted mind-reader". I've seen that when I interact with this type person over a period of

time, I start to get oddly-timed, suspicious and concerned looks cast in my direction (the side-eye). Conversation takes on a cooler, more distant tone. Interestingly, if it's a work situation that goes on for weeks or months, I start to hear unusual things from others, indicating my trustworthiness could be in question. Yes, even though I'm not that great at picking up on subtle social cues, these cues pile up and become difficult to ignore. To the persecuted mind-reader, I am not like-minded, I am not 100% certain of things in the physical realm, and if I doubt myself at times, then I must be guilty of something.

A trend has emerged, maybe not indicating certainty, but certainly indicating likelihood that when a "persecuted mind-reader" interacts with a "detail-oriented guilt feeler", the latter is the easy target for some kind of blame. And of course, when you hit a target, you get a dopamine rush.

Badcock even touches on this. A mechanistic person has some mentalistic deficits, and a mentalistic person has some mechanistic deficits. He says: "Mentalistic deficits are much more socially stigmatizing than mechanistic ones, simply because mentalism is primarily a social adaptation. Mechanistic deficits…are much more easily concealed, and nothing like as socially- or personally-disabling as mentalistic ones."

At my age I have become more farsighted but also more hindsighted. The hindsight advantage has allowed me to craft some mostly effective solutions for dealing with personality conflicts, thankfully. In general, the best solutions involve a firm and continuing adherence to virtuous principles, such as honesty, candor, politeness, and on down the list, building that type of reputation, as opposed to being vengeful which I have tried long ago, only to find it backfired, likely due to my conscience.

Final message: If there's a personality type that you usually don't click with, explore the literature and do some introspecting. There may be a solution waiting.

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(Substack 8/12/23)
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Bitterest
Confucious wrote:
"Of the 3 ways we acquire wisdom,
Reflection is noblest,
Imitation is easiest,
Experience is bitterest."
But I might add that experience causes wisdom's roots to grow deepest. Having said that, I think Confucious embedded a meaning here that might be hidden to some: Your bitter experiences may eventually cause you to learn deeply to put greater value on Imitation and Reflection, so that the roots may grow just as deep through these less bitter ways. (Substack 8/28/23)

Nutshell Domino
Adversity builds strength. America is in decline because most people now refuse to see the looming grim adversity that lurks in our own house. (9/30/23)

Blame Shifting

Interestingly, both extreme adversity on the one hand, and a lack of adversity on the other, causes many people to start avoiding the hard facts, and their minds drift off overboard into excessive emotion and challenge in their lives. The former sometimes requires professional help. The latter is actually less excusable.

Both reactions are largely subconscious, and participants begin to make decisions based on the attractiveness

of various notions, as opposed to the sheer quality and quantity of factual physical evidence.

This in turn causes bad decisions, resulting in bad situations, that leave a bad taste in the mind the next morning, the next year, the next decade, or longer. The weight of taking responsibility builds, and subconsciously becomes too horrible a task to bear.

Thus the avoidance of facts becomes a self-reinforcing process, blinding the self to the need to take responsibility for any part of the situation. So the blame shifting begins.

The difference between people is that some see this drifting-away as an adversity in itself, to be avoided like a disease. Others fall into it, believing it to be a never-ending pool of pleasure. The choice is yours. (12/1/23) (Substack 12/1/23)

Ask Around
"The Old Man and the Sea" was about being so unprepared for success, that when it finally came, it was a burden. Before you strive for success, seek detailed info on how other people achieved and handled it. 6-14-24

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U.S. Collapse?

Much has been written about the historical phenomenon of "societal collapse". Various theories abound, including overpopulation, scarce resources, natural disasters, poor government, inadequate technology, increased complexity, loss of morals (1,2,3,4). But in a brief scan of this literature, I was surprised not to see much about human nature.

History repeats itself.
Oh but, that won't happen to us.

These two sentences together show that human nature does not change. We know great civilizations have fallen. But we're too overconfident to see it could happen to us.

Coaches have a time with overconfident football players. You're 19, you have talent. So human nature whispers into the back of your mind that you can afford to lay back a bit. Your talent will carry you. But the front of your mind cannot hear these whispers. Then when your playing wasn't as good as last week, you point the finger in a dozen directions, except at your own overconfidence. Maybe the coach can help you overcome this, maybe not.

The real first domino in the line is human nature. Just as the vast majority of people have had toenails for thousands of years without any real need for them, our brains come wired with certain pathways that haven't changed for thousands of years. Some brain pathways we still need, some not. Some are under-used, some over-used.

Most of these pathways require us to perceive a certain situation, such as danger, before the pathway gets activated.

"Fight Or Flight" is one brain pathway. In most stressful situations today, such as getting stuck in traffic, we don't really need our heart rate and blood pressure to go up in order to be ready to run or fight. It's a reaction left over from caveman times. But with practice, most of us can eventually learn our way through this overreaction.

What brain pathway overreaction did our football player have? I call it the Layback pathway. And why would we have a Layback pathway wired in our brains?

Because some degree of rest is required for the human body (and the brain is part of the body). We can't go full

steam ahead with maximum adrenaline and cortisol at all times. It would cause early major malfunction in all tissues. So the brain tries to balance what it thinks we need. And sometimes it misses the mark.

If a person looks around himself, and things look ok, the brain tends to activate the Layback pathway to some degree, and the person begins to get overconfident. Over the years, we can learn to control this somewhat, to remain alert to possible problems without being stressed out.

But if you live in a place where you've always got a climate-controlled place to sleep, you're not underweight from malnutrition, and you are not hiding from someone who is out to kill you (basic needs are met), your Layback pathway can get activated to some degree, even if you have other lesser forms of stress in your life, that may not feel lesser at the moment, but they really are.

In fact, when our basic needs are met, some of us subconsciously elevate these lesser stressors to top status, because of another pathway – Fightdesire. We all have some degree of wired desire to "fight for something and against something else." The Fightdesire pathway works subconsciously, causing us to shift a lessor stressor up the priority list into the number one spot. Unfortunately, this can be overdone and leads to increased infighting.

Of course, some people have less to worry about than others, but in a land where the vast majority of us have our basic needs met (as described above), we are going to be a bit less concerned about planning for our future.

Ironically, this is where the downfall starts. The very thing that we strive to eliminate – Adversity – is the very thing that keeps our minds sharp and able to plan correctly for our future. As he old saying goes, "Adversity builds strength."

Without sufficient Adversity, people increasingly become overconfident and careless, making poor decisions due to lack of consequence. They may even start thinking they can cheat a little more on various things here & there, while gradually losing their morals (and marbles).

So, should we stop striving to eliminate Adversity? No. History has shown we tend to move generally upward, but with occasional falls, in a 2-steps-forward, one-step-backward fashion, with each step sometimes taking hundreds of years.

What we should do then is try to help each other understand the surreptitious, unconscious human nature of the Fight Or Flight and Fightdesire brain pathways, but especially the Layback pathway, which is the most underrated and under-realized. Come on, Coach.

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3 Tainter, J.A.: The Collapse of Complex Societies (1988)
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(Substack 8/19/24)

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U.S. Collapse – Additional Notes

The Layback Brain Pathway

People have a "Layback" brain pathway that flips on during extended times of low adversity (no starvation, no fear of being killed). In varying degrees, it causes people to expend less energy and be less concerned with these dire circumstances, since they no longer appear to the individual to be present.

The Fightdesire Brain Pathway
This causes people to have a desire to fight for something and against something else.

The Nextup Brain Pathway
When the Layback pathway is activated, this causes the individual's next concern to be placed in the top priority spot, so the Fightdesire pathway can continue its function with the new priority. Maslow's Hierarchy generally applies here.

The Surrender Brain Pathway
Many people are wired to pass their genes along through surrender to a victor, while others are wired to fight that foe to the death. This way, a tribe could pass its genes along whether it won or lost a war. I think a dominant Surrender Pathway is where Stockholm syndrome comes from.

Inside the US, "real battlefield" adversity has not been widespread in over 150 years, so the mix of these pathways has changed. Here is where I see it now:
The Layback pathway is super-activated in most;
The Fightdesire pathway has diminished somewhat;
The Nextup pathway is super-activated;
The Surrender pathway is super-activated.

(11-12-24)

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A Couple Thousand Years
Much of what I've written on adversity through the years has to do with my hypothesis that a society needs a certain amount of adversity to keep it heading in the right direction, and removal of this beneficial type of adversity is a leading factor in the downfall of some societies throughout history. For a long time I didn't find anyone with a similar hypothesis until I happened upon this quote:

"Decadence and hubris – the natural dividends of prosperity."
- Sallust (86bc – 35bc. Roman politician)

4/22/25

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End of chapter - Adversity

Aging

Testosterone
I think one of the things that tends to mask the incentive of long-term deep satisfaction is testosterone, which itself makes us think short term in many cases. As aging occurs and testosterone decreases, it becomes easier to focus on the deeper satisfaction of delayed gratification.

Pain & Pleasure
When you get older, the reduction of pain becomes one of the pleasures.

Slippage
I suspect it may be more than getting old that causes a person to lose their creative edge and genuineness. Part of it may be a very gradual accumulation of pride, or expectation of continued good results in the physical world. So as we age, we can ask God's help avoiding this pride and expectation, so we can at least maintain our genuineness, even though our creativity will naturally diminish as the neurons become ever more tired.

Societal Patterns
With age, you may come to recognize a pattern as follows: In a society, when certain things are tolerated, they are not only indicators of a society headed off a cliff, but being allowed to continue, these things desensitize us in such a way that they are actually part of the vehicle that drives us off that cliff.

Communication
As the years go by, you may love someone more and more. But with aging, you may grow less confident that both of you will remember the little daily words and actions the same way, no matter who may have the faulty memory in each case. So, forgiveness becomes more important.

Values
Even though I am much older, some things are still really neat to look at, but it no longer means they are important.

Religion
Though religions may believe they are protecting the innocent, it seems the altruism difference between some religions is generally that some are more bound up in anger. Now, I am open to being proved wrong on that, but it's the impression I get after many years of observation, as opposed to simply adopting the idealistic statement that "All religions have similar percentages of haters". This is another case of Observation vs Idealism. I think it's one reason young people are more often Idealistic where older people are more often Practical: Total Years of Observation.

Salvation
This air of finality that descends on us who have finished most of our human lives, might even give the atheist a calm acceptance of things, and a relief that much of the striving is over. But in his case, the worst may be yet to come unless the Lord intervenes, which I believe He can, even at the last second.

Let Go
As I get older, I notice two opposing mindsets: One is the increasing ability to let something go because it

doesn't do any good to deal with it, even if dealing with it would produce some sort of notoriety. Another is an occasional desire to stake out some sort of claim to fame or legacy since most of my human years have passed by already. This second mindset is obviously selfish and requires prayers to keep from being distracted by it.

The Writing Pen
I strive to be like a writing pen in this world, but eventually like all pens I will start writing with a lighter, thinner line, then soon after, will run out of ink. Then it's on to another level I can't even comprehend at this time.

Appearances
As I grow older, one irony is that appearances mean less, but are still interesting. I suspect it may have to do with learning time after time that appearances can be deceiving, but also due to declining hormone levels.

Broken Down
I believe, if it weren't for aging and death, I would continue to figure out better ways to think, often by realizing and seeing the separate components of thought, in an increasingly microscopic fashion, where in previous years many processes seemed like they could not be broken down any further.

Seen
My eyes are full, having seen so many things.

The Baton
Previously I focused on trying to pass the baton to my kids. Now I think I should focus on letting them know to take the baton from God, instead.

Fragility
One thing I might emphasize to the young: Things are more fragile than we think. But this becomes doubly apparent as your body moves forward through the headwind of the decades.

The Pressure
It's actually a relaxing feeling being so old you know you'll never reach a higher level of material success, because now the pressure is off. But it points out that the pressure should have been off anyway, because one thing I've come to see in recent years is that I should have been striving my whole life not to be materialistic.

It's Alright
When I was young, I was filled with horror at the thought of physically dying, and how bad it must be to have to work a job almost up to the time you die. But now when I think about it, the feeling comes over me that "It's alright" and I don't feel worried. It's almost a magical, counterintuitive feeling. I think that's why "It's alright" has been a popular song lyric.

Once when I was having an outpatient procedure, I was answering a question one of the staff had asked me. Just as the anesthesia hit, and I could feel myself rapidly going to sleep, something prompted me to say "It's alright" and then I was out. (August 2020)

Kids
As your kids become adults, you might still tell them the consequences of not changing some of their ways. But for me, the reason is so they might get a little mad at me and then become more determined than ever not to let these consequences occur, so that they don't have to admit that Dad was right. I have no confirmation of this but I think it might be accurate. Whatever works. (Feb. 2021)

Shells
Our spirits ride around in our bodies, but in comparison these bodies are fragile and short-lived. They are like shells or vessels, or ships that are sailed by our spirits, or like androids, although chemical-based. But these

chemical-based android shells eventually fail, and God separates our spirits from them, bringing us to Him, where we will spend the vast majority of our time. (Feb. 2021)

Meds
The more days your body lives on the face of this earth, the more encounters you end up having with people who are off their meds. But it seems like this trend is accelerating. (4/23/22)

Unassuming
As I get older, my intuition has built up and I'm able to more easily able to see potential trouble spots. One is when I'm watching video of people debating, and I see one person slip a quick assumption in his argument, and the second person doesn't realize it's only an assumption and goes ahead and accepts it anyway, thereby weakening his argument against the first person. Kind of like a poison pill. We should stop and say "Wait, what was that you threw in there real fast? What facts back that up?" We all need to take the concept of "unassuming" to a new level and watch out for this.

One example is where it is argued that (a) large numbers of people are disproportionately affected (b) because of a certain widespread standard and (c) certain things must be done about it. Some may quickly accept that (a) and (b) are true, in order to go on and get into debating about (c). Instead, we must say "Wait, slow down, let's take this one piece at a time." (a) may be easy to prove, but what are the numbers showing that (b) is true and not caused by (x) some other factor? I have to roll my eyes every time somebody falls for these assumptions. (5/2/22)

The Best
The best sights and sounds after retirement are not the beach and surf. Instead, they are seeing your loved ones and hearing them talk with you. (6/17/22)

Alternative Fuel
Testosterone affects your passion level in all kinds of abstract concepts. So, when you're a guy and your testosterone level recedes, you face a choice of finding another motivational mental fuel. As trite as it sounds, the best one I have found is the Lord. (8/21/22)

Disconcerting
I figured out that this disconcerting feeling recently is probably due to being unfamiliar with how to think about the physical things in my life, since I have reached the age where I can no longer relate to them long term. However, focusing on the spiritual, alleviates this feeling. (8/28/22)

Bad Bets
Sometimes I wonder if I am able to spot areas where I am not going to succeed because my luck has run out at this age, or my intuition has improved so I can spot them better. Intuition tells me it's both. (11/20/22)

Intuition
If your head accumulates enough facts over time, your intuition becomes more accurate, provided your emotions don't get in the way. (substack 3/3/23)

Quantity vs Quality
The older I get, the less important birthdays are. Not only would you never spontaneously notice "Oh, I feel like the earth was facing this exact half of the sun on the day I was born!", but it is also irrelevant considering the real reasons we are here. (Substack 3/4/23)

Visualize
I'm 65. I used to be a young boy, running and playing in the sun. Take a look at me now. This is what happens to young boys if they live long enough. (4/9/23)

The Best Kind of Learning

As I get older, I would recommend to the young, who tend to watch a lot of movies: Let your super-power be the ability to learn from the mistakes of others. (Substack 4/25/23)

A Tougher Time

Self-doubt is like food. Too much is bad, too little is bad. Those who have psychotic leanings and secretly believe they're right about everything, will have a tougher time as they get older and more forgetful, as opposed to those who have long entertained a little healthy self-doubt throughout their lives. (10/8/23) (Substack 10/8/23)

Pleasant Interactor

Working in a nursing home about 30 years ago, I recall one elderly patient who asked me if he could have a paint brush or something, to do something useful. He expressed his frustration at not being helpful and indicated it didn't feel right to keep on living unless he could do something for somebody. I expressed that he was a valuable person regardless of helping anyone, and that the staff was glad he was here, and just interacting with him was a pleasure.

At the time I thought, "I won't be that way when I get to be his age. I will understand that it will be my turn to be served, and that hopefully, interacting with me will be a pleasure to someone else."

Today, I'm not in a nursing home but emotionally, I understand his frustration deeper than I thought possible. My mind agrees with what I said to him 30 years ago, but my heart is being slow to come around to it. The heart tends to compare old roles we used to have in our lives, to the new roles we have now. And people are not quite so dependent on us now. Odd that the work we put in over many years, to help others become less dependent on us, has had the desired effect, yet we miss that situation.

Come on, heart. Remember what we said to that patient 30 years ago. Then let's work on being the most pleasant interactor we can. If it doesn't always seem to work out, then just be content that the Lord has His reasons which we one day may discover. But either way, He's planned it for our good. (2/11/24)

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That Voice In Your Head

When I was young, I would hear some "wise old saying" several times and then think it was cliché because I had not seen it play out in my personal reality very much, if at all.

At 66, the opposite appears to be true. I have seen so many "wise old sayings" play out in reality over the years, that the lessons from them become a practice instead of a cliché. (Not perfect, but practice for sure.)

One of these wise old sayings is "Listen to the still, small voice." Of course, any "inner voice" that tells someone to commit a crime, calls for psychiatric help. But in many people, the inner voice takes the form of a non-verbal inkling that "Something just doesn't seem right" while they are unable to determine exactly what it is.

Some feel it comes from a higher power, some feel it is from only intuition; others feel it is a combination of both.

In previous years, I had written off the "still, small voice" old saying as insignificant because it was only an inkling, and not an alarm.

However, decades of watching how things turned out when I ignored that inkling, helped to build my hindsight and intuition (in concert with my higher power, as I believe). The overwhelming trend embedded in this accumulated data is that, when the inkling tells me "Something just doesn't seem right," it generally means that I am not Helping Others as I should.

Therefore, in light of "Helping Others" becoming a higher priority, any small voice/inkling also becomes a higher priority, due to its amazing record of accuracy.

"Help" can be difficult to define. For example, many of us come to see that by giving our children an excess of perks, breaks, and even money, we rob them of the adversity that leads them to build a desired character. Of course, "excess" varies depending on how each child thinks, and may need to be redefined for each child. But the inner intuitional inkling can help there as well.

One final note: Respect yer elders! Usually they're the ones with the most accumulated hindsight.

(3/15/24) (Substack 3/15/24)

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Pic
The real picture of physical health is not taken by a camera. It's taken by medical imaging & lab results. (5/6/24)

Trajectory
Now that I'm older, it seems easier not to worry about new decisions. At least one reason for this could be that at this point, any decision I make is unlikely to change my life trajectory, quantity, or quality. (11/21/24)

Shrinking Benefit
In my 20's, I noticed that the younger someone is, the more people give them the benefit of the doubt in most any situation. Little did I know, your portion of "benefit of the doubt" shrinks until around 60 where you get absolutely none whatsoever. 11-24-24

The Bad with the Good
Unfortunately, after about age 30, aging changes your body a certain way. Fortunately, up to about age 70, it changes your mind a certain way. 1-14-25

How Much Further
One thing that's become clearer as I age is the number of my actions affected by gratitude, and the realization that if I had emphasized gratitude decades ago, how much further down the right road I would be by now. But the emphasis is on gratitude for being on the right road now, not regret that I didn't get on it sooner. 4-11-25

MicroWorld
People who get near the end of their human lives & think "Is that all there is?" or "Is this as good as it gets?" are sadly detached from how enormous that God's gift to us really is. 11/6/25

Forward
I think one reason some older people get more prayerful is - your whole life, there's always this feeling of looking forward to something *in this world* – and then there's not.

Sounds kind of opportunistic to intensify prayerfulness at the 11th hour. But the opportunistic part is letting prayerfulness intensity go slack in younger years.

In some cases, intensifying prayerfulness in older years can be opportunistic I imagine, like "Oh God I'm scared, I changed my mind - save me now that time is almost out!"

In other cases, it might be the continuation of an intensification that happens during a multi-decade journey, where spiritual practice improves through practice and there's always been an awareness that the end of physical life is getting closer; and the fact that it *is* getting closer does help to deepen thankfulness for salvation,

and to deepen surrender to God.

But in any case, if the person has accepted Jesus as savior, the person will be saved. People can come to Jesus in all kinds of situations. 2/13/26

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Grand Baby!

When you find out you're expecting a grand baby, all kinds of things go through your mind. One of the main ones is: Now I've got a bit of a second chance at teaching a child some of the most important things in life. And some of them I learned (or at least fine-tuned) after my kids were grown.

One of my favorite teachers has always been Mrs. Hindsight. Having known her since 1957, I've done a lot of homework & taken a lot of tests, but never graduated (I don't think anybody really has).

I'm starting a short list here in April 2025, of some of the things I think a child might be able to grasp, at different points in her first 10 years. I mentioned in the Introduction to "One Dad's Notes" that I had written another document many years ago titled "Dad's school of Life". I think it's on my computer somewhere. I may dive back into it and do some editing, considering my completion of numerous assignments given to me by Mrs. Hindsight since then.

Absolute & Relative Terms
Use words like "always" and "never" only when you are sure about something.
The word "Sometimes" can prevent as many arguments as the word "Always" has started.
For example, "God always loves us" and "God would never do anything against what's best for us."
Use words like "sometimes" and "maybe" when you're not sure about something.
For example, "Sometimes I don't know what God's plan is" and "Maybe if I pray He will let me know."
"Sometimes" is one of the best words. It helps avoid arguments.
"To a point" is one of the best phrases.
The Venn diagram is often close to the truth.
Absolutes are often wrong.

Abstract Concepts
History shows that the cultures who emphasized abstract concepts more than others, advanced further than others. Pull up a list of them & go over each one in depth, as early as the child can understand. Most of the concepts in this article are abstract concepts. Short list:
Love, trust, hope, expectation, joy, sadness, etc.
Proportionality: "Is this person pulling their weight in the team?" "Is the news coverage proportionate to the polls?" "Is the punishment proportionate to the offense?" Etc.
The Classical Fallacies: teach the main ones.
"At what cost?" – a good question to ask in most any situation.

Analogies
Pull up a list. Example: The Blind Men and the Elephant: Several blind men touch different parts of an elephant (e.g., trunk, leg, ear) and each describes it differently, believing their perspective is the whole truth. Jesus often spoke in analogies but they were called parables.

Anxiety
2026 study saying that children with more screen time before age 2 had pre-mature solidifying of certain brain pathways, leading to impaired decision-making, leading to more anxiety by age 13:
https://www.thelancet.com/journals/ebiom/article/PIIS2352-3964(25)00543-2/fulltext
This is why I hope we can avoid screen time with our grand-daughter at our house, and instead focus on decision-making.

Appearances
Do not always judge people totally 100% by their appearances. But do watch out for some things that might look dangerous.

Details
Often the truth is in the details.
Mindfulness exercise: Observing details without further thought – gives your brain a vacation similar to sleep – "it is what it is" instead of "it is what I think it will be".
Mindfulness expansion: Start with observing breath, etc then expand gradually into nonjudgmental observing of daily actions, plans, even concepts.
In this world, always ask: "What is the evidence?" Evidence is not emotion, generalities, or anecdotes. It's provable facts, including numbers.

Emotion, Feelings
Feelings might be right sometimes, and wrong other times.
Think about facts and feelings, not just feelings.
Some people will help you feel good, others will hurt your feelings. When they hurt your feelings, remember you can choose to not give them your feelings. You can give your feelings to those who truly love you. You will always have love, because God loves you forever.

Fairness
God gave us the Bible to learn about fairness.
Try to be fair the way the Bible says.
We will always be learning about fairness, but God is the only one who already knows everything about fairness.
Some people might not treat you fair, so you need to tell your parents when you haven't been treated fairly, whenever it happens.
Sometimes God allows something to happen that seems unfair to us, but He has reasons we don't understand. God knows more than we do, so He can do things we aren't allowed to do. This is fair because only He knows how everything will work out for our best.

Forgiveness
Forgiving someone doesn't mean you agree with them doing the wrong thing.

God All-Powerful
God can do anything He decides to do. And many of these things are not even in the Bible.
God also has the power of knowing everything, including things that haven't even happened yet.
Gratitude to God improves your life more than anything.
Pray for help letting go of immature thoughts.

Happiness
Happiness depends on how you look at things.
Theodore Roosevelt said "Comparison is the thief of joy". It means "too much comparison", because we have to make some comparisons daily, like "Do my socks match?"

Hardship
One reason God put us here is to learn (reference Hebrews 12:11).
Learning can seem hard, but it helps keep worse hardship away.
Sometimes people who love you, give you hard things to learn.
Talk about the hard things you learn, with people who love you.
Keep on learning how much is too much, & how much is not enough, to help keep the hardship away.
Keep on learning the difference between good imagination & bad imagination, to help keep the hardship away.

Heart Language
See also in this document under Heart Language for simpler language of important concepts.

Helpfulness & Giving & Service
God put a desire to help others in your mind, whether you know it or not.
The better you take care of yourself, the longer and better you can help others.
Only God knows how much a person is able to help, and the value of the help (reference Mark 12:43, the widow & the 2 coins).
Jesus said “I do not give as the world gives” (John 14:27). He gave us Forgiveness so we don’t have to feel bad forever, about anything wrong we did.
Thankfulness should lead your heart to want to be helpful.
People might not always thank you for your helpfulness, but God always knows and He loves you no matter what.
When you have that feeling that says "No that's not helpful", it's often right.
Taking care of yourself is helpful, because then you can better care for others.
When grateful to God, actions are motivated toward helping others instead of "self-power".
The more you practice, the better you get.
Your work helps others which helps you feel better because you helped them.
People define help in different ways depending on their situation.
If you’re not helping at the moment, preparing to help is helpful.

Hope
In this world, hope, but do not expect.
In the spiritual world, you can always expect God’s love.
God gives some of His spiritual love to some people, so they can love each other with that spiritual love. This doesn’t make the people perfect, but the spiritual love is perfect.
Don’t set your hopes too high. God loves you whether your hopes come true or not.

Imagination
Imagination can be used for good or for bad, to build up or tear down, or it can be just wasted.
Imagine how you can help people.
Imagine how bad it would be without God's love.
Imagination can be more connected to reality, or less connected to reality. Less connected is usually a waste, or even negative.

Love
God loves you with the same love forever, no matter what happens.
God protects your soul forever.
You are loved the same whether you are successful in this world or not.
Love and attention are not the same thing. They can be related but not always.
Tough love is love.

Order
Keeping things neat and in order helps you to help others, because then you know where everything is, so you can get it and use it easily.
Keeping things neat and in order helps other people to trust you, because they see you keep track of everything so you more often know what you're talking about.
I think I recall when I would put the boys in time out, giving them a reason for it such as "You need to keep your stuff in order because if you don't, you'll have a rude awakening later in life and I don't want you to have a rude awakening."

Physical & Spiritual
Here are a few things that many people learn over decades through many hardships. So skip that time line & learn these very early:
Things that science knows about or that we can feel by touch, hear, see, smell, or taste, are physical.
Our bodies are physical.
Things that science does not know about or that we cannot feel by touch, hear, see, smell, or taste, are spiritual.
Our spirits that live in our bodies are spiritual. God is also spiritual. God loves us forever.
People have physical bodies that look different from each other, but our bodies are not what true love is about.
True love is spiritual. God loves us the same no matter what our bodies look like, because His love is spiritual and true. Your Mom & Dad & grandparents have true spiritual love for you too.
So, no matter what your body looks like, your family and God love you the same because true love is spiritual.
Also, no matter what you do or say, your family and God love you, because true love is spiritual.
Your family and God want you to try to be good but if you mess up sometimes, we love you just the same because our true love is spiritual.
Now, in the physical world, there are some things God & your family want you to do, because they are right, and in the long-run will make your life better.
One of these things is to be respectful.
Another thing is to take care of yourself and some other people too.
Remember, try to do these things but God and your family love you the same even when you can't always do these things every time.
So, be thankful for that true spiritual love you have that stays the same with you no matter what.

Prayer
God doesn’t always give us everything we ask for, because sometimes He has a plan we could not understand.
But by praying, we become humble, and that is one good thing we do understand.

Safety
Girls should try to never to go anywhere by themselves.

Self-Worth
Our true worth is not based, on the world's things or ways, but on God's love which is strong forever.
Your real worth is based on God’s love, not anything in this world.
Some people might not treat you the way you want, but God loves you the same, no matter how you have been treated.
You can be calm and confident knowing your worth is based on God's love, which is always strong and never stops.
Give partial credit to a child for getting part of a job done, until she is old enough to handle the concept that sometimes we don’t get paid until a job is totally completed.
You are not validated or invalidated by anything in the physical world. You are validated by God’s love for you. And this cannot be invalidated.

Sequence
Do things in the right sequence. It can be a fun game! And it will save you time.

Temptation
Temptation wants you to do something wrong, but don’t do it. God will send you a better much feeling later if you didn’t do it!

Thankfulness
Since God loves us, we should feel thankful.
Being thankful keeps you from being angry.
When you get a gift, it should lead your heart to be thankful.

Thankfulness should lead your heart to want to be helpful.
You can't be mad and thankful at the same time. Think of something to be thankful for.

Trust
People think very different from each another.
They might say they think like you, when they really might not think like you.
Remember when someone does what they say they will do.
Remember when someone does what they say should be done.
It takes a long time to get to know someone really well.
You might trust someone if you know them a really long time, but even then you can't be 100% sure on everything.
Trust and love are not the same thing. A person might have trust, or love, or both, or neither one.

Words
Words can be good or bad.
Keep learning the difference between words and actions.

(Last Edited **March 2026**)

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End of topic: Aging

Anger

Anger Thrills

There are those whose primary fuel is emotion. A number of those get regular refills on their anger thrills by setting little traps around them - gradual little impositions, such as physically leaving more & more items in someone else's way over time. Or it may be an ever so subtle deterioration of respect, verbal or otherwise.

Each one of these little offenses is not big enough on its own to warrant a complaint by the offendee, but over time they start to wear on the offendee, who eventually lodges a complaint. Then the righteous indignation begins: "You're going to complain about THAT?!" You might reply "No, it's not just that, it's the sheer number of times it happens."

It might occur so often that you feel like asking “Is my purpose here to create an occasional anger thrill for you?” Of course, if you do this, you may just have given them what their emotion-center wants, although their head may not realize it. So instead, you may just have to say to yourself, “Some people and their anger thrills” and move on.

Anger at God

In the grand scheme of things…it's all a grand scheme. Just kidding. But I would imagine that someone who is angry at God might really think this. Of course, it goes without saying that anger at God is a fruitless foray into futility.

Wrath
I would imagine there is research showing that some people are genetically and/or environmentally prone to "outbursts of wrath", as described in Galatians 5:20.

Without
If you're one of those people who has sabotaged yourself from time to time, here's one insight on how to stop it: Focus on the attitude of defending the innocent, including yourself, but - here is the key - without anger or malice. And of course the main way to avoid anger is to keep repeating and realizing "God is number one", which takes the focus off your personal discomforts and places it on the big picture. (10/1/21)

Constructive Anger
You can be mad at the way things are, and you can be mad at WHY things are the way they are, but only the second one, in a very limited amount, might properly motivate you to seek a reasonable solution. (substack 1/15/23)

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Anger: Processing…

Some people are walking around with a chip so precariously perched upon their shoulder, that if the wind blows it off they will immediately punch the person next to them. They become angry because things don't follow the law of feelings. Things don't have a mind of their own, so it is less than useless to become angry at things.
But anger at people can also be a fruitless endeavor. With all the extra energy expenditure, the arm-flailing, the sweating and overreacting, why is it so much harder to be calm? Mainly because anger literally causes the adrenal glands to release adrenaline, which gives us an energy rush that feels good. We were designed with this mechanism in primitive times to physically defend ourselves or our loved ones. However, today we falsely allow the primitive parts of our minds to view many non-physical threats as life-threatening, and this view activates the adrenals.
We may conceal anger at times, knowing it would get us in trouble. The people around us might not be suddenly exploding in bursts of wrath, but it is difficult to tell which folks do have the hidden short fuse. Sometimes they may have it, while artfully and masterfully venting their anger in other ways that you do not readily see, for example passive-aggressiveness. But that's a whole 'nother topic.
Sometimes we confuse or erroneously blend anger with noble concepts such as passion for service or determination. Anger does not have to be mixed in with these useful attitudes. In fact, its best if we separate them out, and use them "anger-free".
Anger may have a constructive cousin. We might call it a steely resolve or unwavering determination, based on a strong disagreement. Unwavering determination can be communicated without a self-serving, condescending anger. It can be communicated in a way that appeals to the morality of defending the innocent, and to presenting a logical case which has a disarming effect. It can be communicated seriously without venting anger for the selfish purpose of blowing off steam, using personal attacks. It can be communicated in a way that says "It doesn't matter if we disagree, I want you to see the dangers ahead, so you can avoid them." A person doesn't have to use anger in order to be determined. Anger is just the easiest one to call upon, to use as a fuel. A better fuel is a determined passion for service.
Regarding courage: A cause that uses courage based on anger will not last. In order to last, that courage must be based on morality. In fact, anger often blinds us from morality.
Anger, and hitting someone, should go together only in times of lawful self-defense, or during the defense of

innocent people. Even then, anger should be tempered and focused with a determination to protect, as opposed to being inflamed with a desire for revenge.
Tough love: Some may say they are good at empathy and compassion, but it may be selective empathy or selective compassion toward those who are perceived to be victimized (based on shallow evidence), while having no empathy for those who stand alone and give tough love (as the deeper evidence may show). And if tough love is given with an angry feel, it may not be accepted, where given instead with an upbeat, encouraging feel, stands a better chance of being unveiled and accepted for what it really is.
Knowing that we should give up anger is one thing. Recognizing that first mental flash of anger as a red light, in time to slam on the brakes, is another. Learn to see that first inkling of selfishness in your mind, as similar to placing your hand on a weapon of self-destruction. Further, learn to see any flash of anger in your mind, as the weapon being aimed at your foot, so you may stop this process before you speak or act out of character.
One part of working on anger is taking that leap of faith we fear most: Looking at what we did in the past that simply did not work for us. But then ironically, we discover after taking that leap, it was not off a cliff as we feared, but instead only about 6 inches down, and right into the hand of our higher power.
(Substack 7/13/23)

Who's World?

I once called a home repair company to talk with someone about some work that wasn't finished quite right. I was polite about it but apparently by the time my message got to the workman, it had been distorted. He picked up the phone and said to me "This is Bob, it's your world, I'm just livin' in it." I remained polite during the conversation, and I recall it all got straightened out. Be ready for your message to get distorted. In fact, expect that it probably will. That way, you'll be prepared and any surprise will be to the upside.

But you know, we sometimes misperceive God's message to us. This is where "anger at God" occurs. We focus too much on God being in control, and not enough on the fact that He loves us. We hear in church that we are "empty vessels" to be filled with the Holy Spirit, and we focus only on the "empty" part instead of the "filled" part.

Even if we accept we were wrong about this, some of us still focus on blaming the self for being wrong instead of focusing on God's forgiveness. Yes, we were wrong but don't wallow in self-anger. "Shift focus" is what the Bible tells us.

So there are at least 2 reasons not to be angry at God. One is that He has our best interests at heart. Two is that it doesn't do any good whatsoever, because His will is done. (4/21/24)

End of Chapter: Anger

Big Picture

Plan
‘Tis best to have a plan filled with options.

Admit It
If you admit to occasional hypocrisy, at least you are not a hypocrite about admitting your own hypocrisy.

Sustainability
To assign an energy expenditure with sustainability in mind, is one of the goals of a big picture thinker. And the concept of sustainability requires us to constantly be asking, “How could this lead to trouble?” However, rushing the process may create trouble itself, since true sustainability often requires a gradual adjustment of resources.

Smooth View
Have you ever noticed that as you back away from something, and take the larger and larger view, the smoother it looks. This may be true of abstract situations as well as physical objects. God must have the smoothest view of all.

Our Guide
We all try to do what we believe is best, but even Adolf Hitler did that, and a lot of people followed him. So, the Bigger History picture should be our guide.

Small Picture Thinkers
It’s people who don’t even try to think about any unintended consequences that often create ‘em.

Tolerance Limit
Failing to draw the line and defend it, is one way a culture dies. In other words, failing to know when enough is enough, and defend your stance, is one way that a culture dies.

Double Edged Swords
Both Big Picture (expanded view) thinking and Small Picture (narrow view) thinking are needed in society in balance.
Both can be overdone or underdone.
Both can be used for right or wrong.
One type of Big and Small Picture view, is the Long and Short term view.
People will disagree on definitions of Big or Small picture, Overdone or Underdone, Right or Wrong, Long or Short term.
So how can we agree on these definitions?
If we use Facts as the tools for building agreement, then we must use History and Logic.
If we use Feelings as the tools for building agreement, then any agreement reached could change as feelings change, and crumble accordingly, the dust of which will be blown away in the wind.
For example, diversity, not a big or small picture concept in itself, has its happy medium. One may feel that more diversity is always better, because getting more of it appeared to work well over the past 50 years, and he/she may define this as their Big Picture view. However, an even Bigger Picture view of a Larger and Longer world history, shows us that when overdone, diversity causes an eventual slowdown and halt in productivity due to a Tower of Babel effect, with cultural, not just language misunderstandings. So, the person's definition of Big Picture may need to change, in order to avoid this eventual, Long-Term, negative outcome. It appears that the more facts we are willing to talk about, the clearer the picture that emerges.

Spiritual Discernment
Are there people, even in clergy, who believe God is telling them something when it is not always God? Likely. But it is hard to estimate how often this is due to delusions of grandeur vs. any other type of misperception.

Culture & Inclusiveness. Selfishness vs Altruism.
Include the greatest number of people when you use the term "we". This is one mark of a successful society, as long as it is voluntary, not forced. But probably even more than this, ask: Are most people in that society blamers, or sacrificers, regardless of the reason? Also, what has been the trend in recent decades with regard to inclusiveness, altruism, blaming, and selfishness?

National Debt
People who prefer the big picture view and those who prefer the small picture view are often at odds with one another. But since we live in both, those who work together have the advantage. However, this too is a matter of perspective, so some will work together and some will not. It would make a very revealing psychological study if done with minimal bias. However, this is unlikely in today's academic research atmosphere, which is often funded by government, which in the U.S., favors the small picture view as evidenced by one glaring, undeniable thing: The National Debt.

National Debt, Again
Throughout history, people have turned to God during hard times. However, we the people, as well as our government, have been borrowing record amounts of money in order to prevent any hard times. It is worthwhile to ponder a moment on the consequences of this.

The Guardians
When most everyone ignores the warnings of the few watchdogs, they do so at not only their own peril, but also at the peril of the poor watchdogs. So, the watchdogs must know when to get the heck outta Dodge.

Extremes
Most anything can be overdone or underdone. Long term history should be one of our main guides in determining which it is.

Societal Cycles

Although societal attitudes go in cycles as Carle Zimmerman illustrates in "Family and Civilization", there are groups within the main group that resist that trend, and sometimes succeed in spreading their resistance. So, three of humankind's greatest challenges are (1) learning from history what really indicates a harmful trend, (2) knowing when enough is enough, and (3) knowing how to resist effectively.

Societal Cycles: Adversity, Diversity, Cohesion

Dominant societies fall not just because of the lack of adversity, which causes them to become soft, but because of the lack of people in the population who are predisposed to realize this vulnerability as it is surreptitiously increasing.

Another reason is because of a lack of cultural cohesion among the general population which can be described as a "Cultural Tower of Babel" effect, where even if languages are the same, misunderstandings among cultures rise to a level where they prohibit adequate cohesion.

One could argue that what is needed is for everyone to simply respect other cultures. However, respecting other cultures, and respecting the right to have other cultures, are two different things. You may respect another culture's right to exist, but you may prefer not to be around that culture, such as a person whose culture is soft spoken may not prefer to be around a culture where everyone speaks loudly, or vice-versa. Other examples of variations abound.

As the amount of diversity increases, the advantage curve at first goes up when cross-cultural ideas are exchanged, but then reaches a point of diminishing and even negative returns if people increasingly feel other cultures are impinging on their own. Additionally, people differ at the point they feel impinged upon, and differ in their own definitions of extremism, sometimes hypocritically.

In our vice-versa example above, a person from a loud speaking culture may feel his verbal expressions are being inhibited if he increasingly finds himself in the midst of a growing soft-spoken culture. Some people have great flexibility and can adapt to these "outnumbered" cross-cultural situations. But as variation increases, cohesion in general becomes more fragile.

Value

Creation of value is true in economics and in relationships.

Sacrifice

Regarding attitudes that other people pick up on: I never shined more brightly than when ready to sacrifice, and never came across more dark, sinister, and selfish than when not ready to sacrifice. However, sacrifice must be seen from a big picture view: Don't sacrifice your ability to do good things in the future, unless there is no other way.

Culture

The culture that has the most babies, will eventually dominate. Keep in mind, this doesn't happen overnight. But it is often based on things that do.

Voluntary vs. Involuntary Teams

Why is it that "small team thinkers" are usually "big authority thinkers", and big team thinkers are small authority thinkers? It could be that if you tend toward persuading larger numbers of people into your team (voluntary team membership), you feel your team can more often manage itself, rather than appealing to the parent figure (authority) to make people join your team (involuntary team membership). If a person gives this some thought, they will see that in the latter case, Resentment is likely to fester.

Authority could be government, or it could be the officers in a corporation. Of course, we do need authority, but overreach is what I'm concerned with here.

Once I was seeing a patient in a nursing home, and I was talking with the patient's daughter and she had a small child with her. At one point in the conversation I remarked "The more people we can talk into being on our team, the more we can get done." For some reason, she told the child "Listen to what he says." And she asked me to repeat it to the child, which I did. For some reason, I think this "voluntary big team" concept causes a light bulb to come on in some people's minds, while eluding others.

Importance vs Perspective
Some days, concepts seem more deep and profound than on others. Often it depends on if you had a good night's sleep. Some days we might simply feel that the Importance of things varies, and some days we also feel that our Perception of things varies as well. The first is a self-centric view. The second is a big picture view.

Infighting
We're all operating in the ant hill we're given. And I say this with optimism because if ants started fighting among themselves and thinking this job is not worth it, they all die.

Forethought vs Hoarding
Hoarders gather and accumulate but rarely utilize and perform maintenance on the majority of their holdings. In other words, it is poor resource management gone wild.

Speed vs Accuracy
People often get me wrong at first. But later they usually come to see that I don't really have any ulterior motives.

Is one of my purposes in a group, to show people by example that they are not always correct in their assumptions about what's going on in people's minds? In other words, could one of my purposes be to help move people away from the psychosis that naturally intensifies in a group over time?

I have a strong distaste for the level of assumption that many people achieve. In fact, often I will ask for clarity when I am 99% sure of something, even though it may cause some irritation. Even though these clarifications take extra time, I still value accuracy over speed. Of course there are situations where speed is more important than accuracy, and I respect the need for that when it occurs, but that is simply not my area of strength in a group.

Extremes
If we constantly hold ourselves back because of oversensitive people, our society has swung too far in the passive direction and will fail because swinging too far in any direction will cause it to fail.

Extremes
One of the greatest types of intelligence is being able to tell what's too much, and what's not enough.

Big Picture Semantics
There probably needs to be a catchier way of describing the continuum of "big picture" vs "small picture" thinking, which has become a trite and boring sounding way of describing it.

Long term thought may be thought of as forethought or long-thought, as opposed to short-thought, but long is related to time only, where big picture includes time and other resources as well. For example, big picture thinking might include cleaning your house so germs and bugs don't accumulate, which has a time element but also a physical element.

"Expanded view" vs "Diminished view" is too technical sounding. "Big picture view" vs "small picture view" is catchier but when describing a person, "big picture viewer" doesn't sound right, so "big picture thinker" is used instead. So, with regard to avoiding boring or clumsy semantics, there are "big picture thinkers" with "big picture views" and "small picture thinkers" with "small picture views".

Semantic Antics: Accumulation
There are certain principles that we ignore at our own peril. One is nickel-and-diming. I should probably strive to find a catch-phrase to describe nickel-and-diming because it covers time as well as money and other resources. It needs a new catch-phrase to grab attention in this increasingly sensationalized culture.

"Subtle Accumulation" or "Gradual Accumulation" is too technical sounding. "Boiling the frog slowly" is a widely used old phrase that captures the deception, but not the accumulation part. The old phrase "Chipping away" is kind of trite and loses the listener's attention. "Don't be a victim of wallet death by a thousand small

purchases" comes close but it may be too wordy.

Also, nickel-and-diming can be positive or negative, depending on whether you are being nickel-and-dimed, or you are saving your nickels and dimes (adjusted for inflation of course). How well you understand it indicates whether you are a big-picture or small picture thinker. The reason I use the word "thinker" is to personalize it, and help bring it from the nebulous parts of the mind, into the part where the light bulb comes on, since we in the U.S. are, sadly, not as accustomed to thinking in abstracts as we used to be. As Thomas Sowell notes, thinking in abstracts, or lack thereof, has made huge differences in the success of cultures around the world. And as Thomas Locke wrote, "Beasts abstract not."

Attic Accumulation

At some point in life, when you are attempting to organize your possessions, the exciting thing should not be "Look at this container I bought today" but instead, "Look what I got rid of today!"

Widespread Accumulation

"The Cost of Mess". This would be a good book title about selfishness vs selflessness, chaos vs order, big picture thinking vs small picture thinking, hoarding, procrastination, 2nd law of thermodynamics, etc. And not just with physical items, but also with mental undealt-with baggage.

Productivity vs. the 2nd law of thermodynamics

In college in the 1980's, I learned about the 2nd law of thermodynamics, which the professor said was "All systems tend toward a state of maximum disorder". Through the years I've spoken about it jokingly, also noting that some effort is required to counteract it.

But today it occurred to me that those who emphasize respect for a higher power are generally counteracting this law. From the bees respecting the queen bee, to armed service people respecting and following orders from their generals, to those who respect God and try to follow His word. If we follow ethical orders, usually we counteract disorder. We construct, not destruct. We oppose chaos, through work and effort.

Unfortunately, all of us do not do this, especially when there is no threat of mass starvation to motivate and pull enough of us together, to make effort to stop the decay. Those of us who can imagine how bad things could easily get though, are the ones who continue to respect a higher authority, and make effort to prevent this disorder. Those who do not, ride upon our backs without realizing it. Yet God soothes our consciences, knowing we have made effort to build long term, not just short term, safety and security, because we care about future generations.

More Than Just Nice-Looking

People dislike trashy run-down areas not just because it looks bad, but they have a subconscious inkling there are more dangerous people there. Statistics show its true, but the reason is that many of the inhabitants tend to think short term.

Thousands of decisions are made there every day: Should I carry this trash in the house or simply throw it out the car window? Should I save a little money every pay-day for a new roof, or get a more expensive car? Should I make efforts to find work, or simply take the money the government has for me, or just take the money someone else has in their pocket right now?

So, buying a house in a nice-looking neighborhood is not necessarily just because it is pleasant to look at. There is some deep subconscious psychology at work here.

Honesty

When you know that someone is going to commit an offense if you tell them the truth, it might be ok to omit the truth, considering the bigger picture. However, it is unfortunate that we will either disagree on what the bigger picture is, or how to get there.

Avoiding Spoiling

I am tired of being called stinjy and then being expected to ride to the financial rescue when someone is out of money. The big picture view tells us we need to save for emergencies.

Forethought vs Reaction

In life, there are the controllables and the uncontrollables. One of the controllables is choosing to prepare for the uncontrollables. Often, us worry-warts who suspect the worst could happen, know best how to prepare for the uncontrollables. Sometimes it's hard to tell the difference between the controllables and the uncontrollables. So, if we work on all of it, we at least cover the uncontrollables.

Why

We like to ponder why things happen, but the answer to some of these questions simply involves the slippage of time.

Human Nature and Economics

Without getting political, here is a simple economic statement: No economic system is perfect. This is because of human nature. The people in charge of any economic system will often be corrupt.

So the question becomes, what system makes it harder to be corrupt? The answer is: a system where people have a choice of where to spend their money. If the people in corporation A are jacking up their prices because they are greedy, the only way to avoid paying high prices is for there to be a corporation B where people can go instead. Corporation B can exist only if they make enough money to stay in business. So, even if the people in corporation B are corrupt and greedy and want to jack up their prices too, they still have to sell at lower prices and similar quality to corporation A, if they want to survive. As you can see, even though you might not like the people in corporation B, and they might not like you, they STILL have to give you what you want, or go out of business.

Now, there is a widely held and rarely challenged assumption that if the government totally runs the economic system, there will be less corruption. This assumption is mainly held by people who have not spent very much time observing governments through the years, because decades of such observation reveals many recurring patterns of words at odds with results, which gradually lifts the veil of deception.

The pattern is: People in government are just as often corrupt as people in corporations. However, as a free market consumer, you can change what you purchase off the shelf on any given day. Unfortunately you cannot boot the corrupt people out of government on any given day. This takes years and by then, they have likely spread their corrupt influence into the market using preferential laws, regulations, and government spending, and spread it to and through media, which makes it even harder to get rid of them.

If corporation A and corporation B together hold most of the market share and they decide to collude and change their prices together, it's called a "trust" and there are anti-trust laws to take care of that. But if they don't hold most of the market share, it creates an opportunity for someone to start corporation C. Corporation C will work hard to give people what they want, even if they don't care about the people.

But if someone in government has decided to take favors from corporations A and B, and then creates a set of regulations that corporation C cannot afford to comply with, then you have crony capitalism, where government becomes involved in capitalism, meaning it is no longer real capitalism, and moves toward fascism. If many of these small business "corporation C's" across the country can get their word out, the people will know what's really going on, and vote accordingly with their purchases, as well as voting at the ballot box. But if media does not give them a voice, crony capitalism (which is really a type of fascism or government-dominated business), will prevail. This in turn distorts capital markets & usually causes prices to rise by squeezing out competition.

From Profound to Obvious

Over the years, it has become so obvious how to keep a country both safe and free in the long run that it is no longer a profound notion in my mind, but instead it is sheer common sense. In fact, this could be one reason for my "old man grumpiness" - that people seem not to have what I now perceive as common sense.

Accumulation Conversation

One conversation that parents need to have with kids is the Accumulation Conversation, complete with math examples, especially how eating cheaply can save you 1 or 2 thousand dollars a year. (2017)

Half coin vs. Whole coin
Is it anti-tails to say we should look at the other side of the coin? Small picture thinkers would have us think so. There are no neutral news sources, despite what we prefer to think about our favorite channel. And this is not new – in the late 1700's newspapers often favored one side or the other. Instead, the person who seeks to see both sides must dive into one side and then change the station to dive into the other, then compare the two. (7/16/20)

Spiritual Ricochet
The big picture and long-term view is that our spirits head toward the earth, and ricochet off the surface, spending relatively little time in actual contact with it. (Feb. 2021)

Various Spectra
The older I get, the more it seems there's a need to categorize thoughts using dimensions, spectrums, ranges, or continuums. Each spectrum can be defined by the names of the extremes on both ends, such as Selflessness vs. Selfishness, Generalizing vs. Differentiation. These names seem to represent an "all or none" type of thinking. But on the contrary, most of the time in this world, a spectrum with all points in between is usually the best way to look at things in order to begin solving disagreements and other problems.

The "spectrum" world view also fits hand-in-glove with the notion that absolute terms such as "never" and "always" tend to aggravate disagreements, while relative terms such as "hardly ever" and "most often" lean towards solving them. (4/1/21)

Realism vs. Sensationalism
Societies are less likely to be attacked if they are in a position of strength, but if it happens, and their leadership emphasizes strength, they will be more likely to recover and formulate a strong defense. If leadership emphasizes appeasement, in other words, paying off the bully, it will likely do so in secret or with a convoluted explanation in order to fool the public, and the bully then will continue to demand future payments. The appeasement approach can be exposed to the public for what it is, only if there are enough Realists in the population, to counterbalance the Sensationalists in the population. (5/11/21)

The Smoke
When looking for evidence, often it is a matter of whether the smoke is associated with mirrors or fire. **(8/11/21)** (substack 1/20/23)

The Points
It seems that in order to have both a safe & free society, the mindset of the average citizen needs to have a sweet spot mix of the "switch to violence" (STV) point, and the "join together" (JT) point.

STVP: The point at which we switch to violence should be a high bar, where we are finally fed up with tolerating a large amount of adversity (The US Revolutionary War for example). But it should not be too high, otherwise we put up with most anything until we finally fight back, and by then it may be too late. It should not be too low either, otherwise we end up physically fighting over less significant things, which hinders progress.

JTP: The point at which we put aside our differences and join together in a larger, undefeatable group should be at a lower point of adversity. But if it is too low, we risk shutting out opposing views, some of which may be an advantage to consider. If it is too high, we never coalesce into an effective force and are doomed to lose the war.

Variables:
Low STVP + High JTP = small, physically warring factions within the society, fighting over less significant matters. No one can agree on a government. The crime rate is high in this society.
Low STVP + Low JTP = a large formidable group of people banded together, ready to physically fight a common foe but over less significant matters.
High STVP + High JTP = People put up with a whole lot before they are ready to physically fight, but not enough of them are courageous enough to join together and do it. This is a country where the population allows itself to be ruled with an iron hand by a central government such as a dictator or oligarchy. Then government

corruption runs high. The official crime rate may be low due to the police or military state, but the real crime rate as committed by the police state itself is high.
High STVP + Low JTP = Best option for a safe & free society.
(11/15/21)

Other Points
Other variable points that might interact with one another and might be tested in psychological studies, or behavioral genetics studies, may include:
JTC point: at which someone Jumps To a Conclusion not backed by fact.
BTA point: at which someone makes the Biggest Thrill Assumption, which gives them the biggest adrenalin-testosterone-dopamine jolt regardless of any reasonable assumption that might have been reached.
PVR point: at which someone has a Physical or Verbal Reaction.
IPVR point: at which someone has an Irrational Physical or Verbal Reaction.
(11/22/21)

Second Level
Once when I was about 5 years old I think, I had tried to do something or get something and my Mom said no. I remember saying to her "You don't love me" and she replied something like "That's not true, I do love you." Later in life I realized that a parent's tough love might include trying to teach children out of their childish impulses. Learning this is a second level maturity, a step up from the childish heart that is so self-centered.
Fast forward into adulthood, and sometimes I still struggle with feeling in my heart whether God loves me, because my hopes don't always match His will. So once again the Head must gently lead the Heart, to trust that God is guiding things for our ultimate benefit, even though we don't see any benefit in it right now. (2/14/22)

There's Always One
In world affairs, he who has the best weaponry can do what he wants. Mostly, trying to negotiate with foreign countries that have effective weaponry is worse than useless. Over-reliance on talk actually fuels this their ability to get away with most anything, giving them time to strengthen their arsenal in secret. Someone will always be the one with the best weaponry. This is why we should strive for the situation where those with the best weaponry end up being those with the most conscience, and the most deeply rooted morals. (3/16/22)

Overblown Emotion
We humans are set with an impossible task, to determine how much is too much or too little, when in many cases the math or evidence is unsettled, unavailable, overly complex, or just plain ignored. Many strive to get this evidence, or interpret it, or make it available, while others thwart them every step of the way, based on overblown emotion.
So, a balance between logic and emotion must occur in order to have a balanced society. Unfortunately, those who are overly prone to emotion are blinded to this by their own emotion itself. They will be the ones who unwittingly shoot our society in the foot, and that will bring back the adversity, which will push many minds back into the land of logic out of necessity, which will painstakingly bring back the balance we need. To think we are immune to this type of human history cycle is to ignore the evidence. (4/15/22)

For Young People
Let's say 2 people work in fast food making the same money. One spends money in a bar every weekend, while the other person saves that money. After a few months, the saver buys a ladder & some painting supplies and makes even more money using them once a week. You can see the path each person has chosen and even guess how each person might end up.
This might sound like a sermon but I'm really talking "who gets the Bigger Bang for the Buck." People are willing to give you more of their money, if you give them more of something they need. Both of the fast-food workers started out making the same paycheck and spending the same money. The difference ended up being what went on in their minds. **(8/25/22)** (Substack 4/9/23)

Healthy Doubt

If someone cuts you off in traffic, it could be (a) they are selfish, or (b) maybe their child is in the car bleeding and they are trying to get to the hospital. If you automatically decide it is without a doubt (a), then you need to revisit the bigger picture. (10/26/22)

The Accumulators

One of the most poorly understood concepts or principles is that of Accumulation. The accumulation of damage, and thus the need for maintenance. The accumulation of time, and thus the need for long term thought. The accumulation of debt, and thus the need to understand what is a true need. Etcetera.

I once heard in chemistry class that, without any effort to the contrary, systems tend toward a state of maximum disorder (2nd law of thermodynamics). Apparently it is the heartfelt duty of some to make effort against this phenomenon, so that any chaotic effect of accumulation might at least be minimized. (1/2/23)

Accumulation: Underrated

The unrealized Nickel and Diming of time, money, and other resources, is sadly one of the most underrated concepts to elude the vast majority of the population. (substack 1/16/23)

Forethought and then Action

When you're thinking ahead, you're thinking with your head. (substack 1/16/23)
Also, not only is it best to think about it ahead of time, it's often best to DO it ahead of time as well, whatever it may be. (1/17/23)

Rush

Some may be quick to shout "An eye for an eye!" which is a combination logic/emotion recipe that appeals to human nature. Emotion drags this vague type of Logic in the room by the hand, giving the Mind the green light to go ahead and act. Of course, this recipe can be used to inflame a howling mob, but in their rush to judgment, have the shouters correctly identified the offender and any possible reasons behind the offense? Alas, if the shouting has begun, it's an indicator that cooler heads might not be prevailing. (1/29/23)

Enough

Knowing correctly the point where enough is enough, is one of the most underrated types of intelligence. An even greater type is knowing correctly how to act on it. (substack 2/8/23)

Brain Cells and Ants

People are like brain cells, communicating with one another by the millions, leading to different thought patterns in different groups of cells, then finally a decision by the larger organism, yet ironically, that decision not being totally understood by each individual brain cell. (substack 2/15/23).

Or it could be said more simply like this: People are like brain cells, each doing their part to form a collective thought, yet individually having no complete idea of what that thought is.

Another analogy would be the ants: I compare myself to an ant, who strives to work as a member of the team because its mission is inborn, yet unable to contemplate the complexity and entirety of the Anthill.

Now, it may be that some units (brain cells or ants), or groups of units, have the job of limiting or promoting the activities of other units. If this is done well, keeping systems from doing too much or too little in any direction, the person or the ant hill prospers and does well. This should be a clue that societies should strive not to follow the models of failed societies. In other words, History should be our guide. (2/17/23)

Trends vs. Exceptions

A trend should not be ignored just because there are exceptions to it. To downplay the trend and play up the exceptions is disproportionate; it's a lie by exaggeration. We can often move toward solutions, but only by dealing with the trends. Take note of the exceptions along the way, but don't get sidetracked by them. (Substack 3/6/23)

We the Thinkers

Being a one-domino thinker is not the same as being a first-domino thinker. These two exhibit very different tendencies. A one-domino thinker tends to oversimplify: Domino 5 in the line knocked down domino 6, so domino 5 was the sole and only reason domino 6 fell. A first-domino thinker makes effort to see the big picture and does the work of searching for a root cause. (Substack 4/22/23)

Of course, sometimes the solution is simple and nothing else is involved. There might be only one domino falling into one other. But only the big picture thinker can be sure of this, after looking at and ruling out other pitfalls and possibilities. However, in these simple cases the small picture thinker may pipe up and say "I told you that's all it was," and then take credit. All you can do is look up to the ceiling and take a deep breath.

Another dilemma arises when the problem is alleviated by the small picture thinker's solution, yet there remains a high risk of problem recurrence. The small picture thinker is usually not concerned with recurrences, preferring to deal with them if and when they have already happened. The word "Proactive" may be in their vocabulary but by their nature, they have redefined and limited it to favor speed over accuracy.

Big picture thinkers tend to think long term and hold to principle, and to previously established or long held guidelines. This process is one aspect of integrity. Small picture thinkers tend to find a thrill in throwing principle to the wind, and their minds gravitate toward change as a sensational and exciting new adventure. They prefer certain concepts, such as:

-Redefining, including words, situations, concepts;
-Generalizing with little or no evidence;
-Splitting - a psychological term meaning the person sees no gray areas or middle ground compromise, instead seeing only one way or the other. They seem to have only a superficial understanding of the word "sometimes";
-Impulsivity;
-Sudden Rejection with little or no evidence, including the urge to scrap a system totally and start over (Throw the baby out with the bathwater). This comes from a combination of Generalizing, Splitting, and Impulsivity;
-Rationalization - a mental process that allows the person to devalue physical or factual evidence in favor of what the person feels they want, then allowing the Redefining process to take place, which masquerades as logic in their way of thinking.

The big picture thinking process often takes more time, so it is yet another example of accuracy versus speed. In life, we end up needing both speed and accuracy at different times and in differing degrees and combinations. So, small picture thinkers have their place in the overall safety-seeking plan of humankind.

Unfortunately however, history shows us many long-term cycles where small picture thinkers eventually come to outnumber the big picture thinkers in a population, causing a collapse in a previously successful society. The silver lining is that after this collapse and subsequent return of much calamitous adversity, many of the overabundance of short-term thinkers will be forced to begin thinking long term, slowly and painstakingly setting about rebuilding a secure society, completing this historical cycle. **(4/23/23)**

Looking for Trouble

I seek to think about profound concepts like I seek oxygen. Sometimes during regular everyday conversation that is normal to most human beings, I feel I am smothering in a sea of mundane, careless talk that is oblivious to any danger that could come to us and find our brains basically unmanned and uninhabited. This feeling of course is not appropriate at times. But it reminds me of my tendency to be a troubleshooter, and to look for potential trouble in advance, so that it can be circumvented before it even starts or gets out of hand. (4/26/23)

The Birthday Problem

Counterintuitive coincidences happen. Consider the famous "Birthday Problem" probability example (Richard Von Mises, 1939). Even though there are 365 birthdays (most years), the math shows that if you have only 23 people in a room, the odds are 50% that two of them will have the same birthday. With only 70 people in the room, the odds increase to 99% that two will have the same birthday. (We just can't predict which birthday that will be.)

It can cause us to wonder about how things occur in groups or go in cycles. Gravity or chemical or other attractions come into the mix, causing congregations to occur. For example, the universe is mostly space, but stars seem to congregate in galaxies.

Aside from magnetic gravity, we might also wonder about a sort of gravity of situations, for which the math behind the Birthday Problem is only one example. Seems like quite often, I have been sitting in a parking lot in my car for five minutes and no one has driven by. Then as soon as I go to pull out, here comes a car. Or two. When these things happen, I sometimes mutter to myself in a disappointed tone, "What are the odds." Then I realize, the odds are actually pretty good. So be even more careful than you think you need to be. (Substack 6/4/23)

Hitler

What have we learned from Adolf Hitler? Sometimes what we learn from someone, is how not to be. And how to watch out for others like him. (Also, one good bet is that anyone whose last name was Hitler has had it legally changed by now.)

Hitler initiated wildlife protection laws, antismoking laws, welfare systems for poor families, Mother's Day as national holiday, road improvements, and Volkswagens. We should not totally throw these ideas out because Hitler promoted them. They were tools that he ultimately misused. The tool is not the person. A hammer can be used for good or evil, depending on whose hand it is in. We don't throw away all the hammers.

I do not elevate Hitler, but instead use him to make the point that increasingly today, many people are overly simplistic in their judgments.

There is even a psychological term called "splitting" where a person thinks in extreme "black and white" terms, and thinks everyone is either on the good list or the bad list, and there is no in between. This is common in certain personality disorders.

Most people are a combination of vice and virtue, with the proportions changing over time.

We should dive into the complicated details and salvage what we can, to use for good purposes. When a person commits vehicular homicide, we don't throw the car in jail along with him. We don't declare that diamonds are useless because they were imbedded in some useless rock.

I don't generally agree with the old saying "the devil's in the details". I think often he's not in the details, but wants you to think he is.

In fact, we need to be able to separate these things out, to more clearly see if a deceitful person is using some good ideas to gain our trust.

Bottom line: Those who don't believe in the separation of baby and bathwater, are doomed to repeat history. (Substack 6-25-23)

Tough love

In certain situations, to give your money to your loved ones is the easiest and weakest thing, but to withhold it so they will grow and learn, is the hardest thing, especially when they dislike you for it. (Substack 8/1/23)

Screens

When we look at screens all day, we are looking for the best information on which to spend our time. Sometimes it's productive, but human nature sometimes causes us to overdo it. Turn away from your screen and go help someone with something, no matter how small it seems. You may discover to your heart's surprise, that was the best information, and the best time spent. (8/12/23)

Grumpy People

What is one thing that happy people do? They tend to over-estimate the number and severity of things going on in other people's lives. Grumpy people do the opposite. (Substack 8/19/23)

Not Always

I recall around age 20 having the thought that "Things are not all one way or another." I started seeing things as continuums instead of absolute "either/or" choices. Of course, when you believe things are not all one way or the other, you have the flexibility to believe that some things are "either/or" choices, and other things are not. This gets closer to the truth in most cases, and probably could help a lot of people avoid a lot of those arguments where the usually inaccurate word-weapons "always" and "never" are hurled back and forth in hurtful dialogue. (Substack 10/11/23)

Counterintuitive

When a person believes that a fact is not true because it is counterintuitive, the person of course exhibits a limited understanding, for whatever reason. One has only to look at the multitude of optical illusions available to know that human perception is faulty to an extent.

Even our ability to sense the likelihood of a correct answer to a word problem might lead us astray. Web search "The Birthday Problem" or "The Monty Hall Problem". Most people struggle with just these two brain teasers, thinking "No way. This can't be right."

One of the longest-standing and farthest-reaching examples is when most people thought the earth was flat. Eventually, the bigger picture view showed us that what is counterintuitive, should not always be denied. And in this case, it took thousands of years for the scientific proof to come through. Radio waves have always existed as far as we know, but were not discovered until the late 1800's. Of course, science is much more advanced today, but how much further can it go? There are theories of parallel universes, but we haven't yet developed a way to detect whether they exist.

The overriding brain illusion here is that most people of each generation self-centeredly and casually believe that science has just about reached its pinnacle, and that if something in nature hasn't been proven or disproven by now, then it likely won't be.

The big picture is humbling. But then, humility is one of the best mindsets to be walking around with on any given day. (Substack 10/16/23)

Conscience or Consequence

People have different spectrums. For example, in the math spectrum, one person may be more naturally gifted while another finds math to be a hard thing. Now, depending on how hard each person studies, they might score better on their tests. But the naturally gifted person will always have the advantage. The same is true in basketball. The taller person will always have a starting advantage. Some people may be taller and also naturally better at math, some neither, some more of one than the other. But how hard we study or practice does make a big difference.

There are thousands of spectrums, and each one of us has a unique set of them. But one of the most important spectrums is the conscience spectrum. This involves a natural response of feeling guilt when you don't help someone, and especially if you disrespect them.

The conscience spectrum is difficult to assess in other people, because it begins as a feeling. However, aside from any level of naturally present conscience, people learn early that we should not disrespect others, and we should be helpful, or we will get in trouble. For example, in the person with little or no conscience, this early learning may prompt the person to be respectful as a way of staying out of trouble, where their weak conscience is not doing the job. So, outwardly, you may have two people who are respectful to others, and one of them does it from conscience, while the other does it to avoid consequence.

More broadly speaking, in a society, order and safety can be double edged swords. They may be achieved by conscience or by consequence, or various combinations of the two. The less they are achieved by conscience, the more they will be achieved by consequence. This reveals the next truth: The more that order and safety are achieved by conscience, the more trustworthiness there is in the general population, and the more freedom there is. (Substack 12/7/23)

Don't Sleep in Your Car

When it comes to priority spending, don't put the cart before the horse and don't put the car before the house. 1/28/24

Winner – Best All-Around Mindset

I have a visual memory from my 20's, driving down 18th street south in Birmingham Alabama, toward my house on 15th Avenue South, thinking "I need to figure out the best possible attitude (mindset) that a person can possibly have." It wasn't until around my 50's that I had seen enough to finally come to the conclusion that it was Gratitude. (2/4/24)

Hug
When you hug someone, you have each other's back. (4/10/24)

Unreal
In this world, unlimited is unreal. People who always say "Do more!" without considering the limits, are in for a rude awakening. (4/21/24)

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Spectrum

No, this is not about the company that millions of Americans call several times a year to ask what happened to their internet.

As I get older, I find myself thinking of many things in terms of spectrums, or scales. For example, on the Math Ability spectrum, compared to everybody else, I might rate as a 50: Average, right there in the middle between zero and a hundred. There are all kinds of tests that can pinpoint your math ability on a scale or spectrum.

But some spectrums are very much matters of opinion. For example, the Helpfulness spectrum.

Let's say there's a person named Henry, and I don't expect him to help me out with anything, and I haven't needed any help from him. He hasn't helped me so I rate him a zero on my personal Helpful scale. But he's also no burden to me, so he rates a zero on my personal Burden scale.

But if Henry is a family friend, he might feel a need to be helpful to me. And if he can't figure out a way to be helpful, he might feel a little useless.

Henry, if you're out there, the brave soldier thing to do is simply stand by, in case your help is needed. You can certainly say to me, "Just let me know if I can help you out in any way." Simply being there and being ready, is sometimes the most you can do. Shed that useless feeling and adopt the feeling of the optimistic person who awaits the call. And Henry, since I know you are just willing to help, that by itself helps my heart. Just knowing that, takes you from a zero to a hundred in my book.

Now that I've finished that example, I can say that the advice I just gave to Henry, is really advice for myself.

(5/13/24)

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The Sea
In a sea of factors, the bigger economic picture with regard to human nature is that there will never be a perfect economic system. The real question is "Which system would cause the least economic problems in the long run?" 5-16-24

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Ron's rehearsal dinner speech for Stephanie & Daniel

Hi I'm Daniel's Dad.

First I want to express our great appreciation to the Connors, for all the labor of love they put into the wedding and celebration, and our happiness that our families will be joining together with love in Christ.

Congratulations to the bride & groom on the big day coming up tomorrow, based on the love that has bound them together.

There are a lot of situations Stephanie & Daniel have to look forward to. And in keeping with my usual function as a Dad, I have to say there are things for Stephanie and Daniel to watch out for as well.

Adversity is a part of life, but as the old saying goes, “Adversity builds strength.”

Many common wedding vows have included the phrase “for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health.”

Pastor Charles Stanley once said:

“Adversity is not simply a tool. It is God’s most effective tool for the advancement of our spiritual lives. The circumstances and events that we see as setbacks are oftentimes the very things that launch us into periods of intense spiritual growth.” And that was Charles Stanley.

The Bible says

“For those who love God, All Things, work together for good”.

So any person, going through life has their own set of All Things, which includes the adversities as well as a lot of great and wonderful and immensely enjoyable experiences, one of which is happening tomorrow!

And now Stephanie & Daniel, God is giving you the opportunity to go through All Things, as a team.

God bless you. (June, 2024)

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Subculture Shock

The older you get, the more hindsight you have. And hindsight helps you see the big picture. I spent my 20’s & early 30’s playing in rock bands, while slowly inching through college. Then finally at about 34, I made the change from band life to life in a health care job. The culture shock was like hitting a concrete wall. In bands, it was a jovial atmosphere, lots of kidding around, and we personally saw each other as equals. In health care, you would think the workers would be more compassionate toward their fellow co-working humans, but shockingly few were. They all pretty much provided care for the patients, and hob knobbed with their own clique subgroup, but most were very thin skinned, held a grudge, and became vindictive if their social point system got out of balance. 90% of my co-workers were female, and honestly I have heard several of them over the years say that this is often the way women are, at work.

I was secretly appalled. I don’t know if I was just unfortunate to fall into this situation, but it lasted on and off, about 60% on, 40% off, about 30 years. Fortunately the last 8 years before retirement I worked with a mostly great bunch of people. But at the beginning, 30 years prior, I had learned early on not to kid around so much. I still had the ethical trait of thinking of others as equals. I often gave people the benefit of the doubt, and I refused to partake in the widely accepted strategy of digging up dirt on people. So when I did stand my ground, I was a vulnerable, easy target. I recall one time thinking I felt like a mouse captured by a cat, batted around just for the fun of it.

But it wasn’t until the great hindsight point of retirement, scanning backwards in time, I noticed that the culture shock had left such a negative impression that I effectively began blaming myself for the uncaring attitudes of co-workers. Unfortunately this continued on and I had a real self-esteem problem. It sort of became a self-fulfilling belief because I often felt unworthy of developing lasting friendships, and I would actually sabotage some of these developing friendships by cooling off to them, feeling that they really didn’t need to become my friend, because I would just disappoint them ultimately.

My family life however was overall good. My wife and I had the typical disagreements, mostly over money and communication, but we would always work it out, and this got better and better over the years. My kids are grown now and although we had rough spots also, we worked it out. I wasn't a perfect husband or father, but I think I did ok, at least from the feedback I have gotten thus far.

But work plays a big part in your life about who you are. For years I felt like when I retired, I could probably finally be my whole self again. And this ended up being mostly true. But there was also the realization that I probably had been too oversensitive to the culture shock, and should not have let the aggressions of others dictate my self-esteem. Of course, in the middle of it, I found it impossible to adjust that sensitivity knob. I'm still probably more sensitive than I should be with regard to being liked, but it has gotten much better over the years with the practice of realizing deeply in my heart, that God is the Great Equalizer. No, he doesn't smite others with His wrath as we would always see fit. Instead, he values us equally. If I do something right, it's God working through me. If I do something wrong, He's giving me a lesson I need to learn. But this is not an adverse relationship. He always has our best interests in His heart. (6/18/24)

Too Big
Big entities (governments and corporations) put their own growth ahead of the people they are supposed to serve. That's why I'm a small government voter, and a small business supporter. (7/21/24) (To JW)

Hammer Time
You've heard the expression that when all you've got is a hammer, everything starts to look like a nail. But in the big picture, when all you've got is a human brain, everything looks like it can be analyzed with a human brain. 2-18-25

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Listen to the Old Folks
We Can't Escape the Stats

We have a mini-warehouse society, a knick-knack economy.

1970 US population: 200 million
2025 US population: 347 million
Increase: 73.5%

1970 US mini-warehouse facilities: 1000
2025 US mini-warehouse facilities: 55,000
Increase: 5400%

Most mini-warehouses across the land are filled with stuff that is just not being used. But many people give away their stuff instead of paying to rent an apartment for it:

1970 US thrift stores: 1500
2025 US thrift stores: 30,490
Increase: 1933%

So we buy way more than we need, compared to 1970. Now if someone has plenty of money and is buying within their means, that's one thing. But consider this as well:

1970 US consumer personal debt: $607 billion
2025 US consumer personal debt: $18 trillion
After adjusting for inflation, that's a 249% increase. In other words, the average American is three and a half times deeper in debt today, compared to 1970, and inflation is no excuse.

Reminds me of the 2005 movie “Fun with Dick and Jane” where the couple had lost all their money but they still had to find a way to get their habitual coffeehouse treats. Also, I've been through several economic recessions and haven't noticed any fingernail shops close down from consumers cutting back.

People simply aren’t psychologically motivated to pay attention to the math like their grandparents did. But they won’t admit this on a survey or on camera. People say the economy is lousy and for some it is, but in the big picture we keep filling up mini-warehouses, donating to thrift stores, and racking up debt like never before. That’s why those “consumer sentiment” numbers are in my opinion, caca del toro.

People don’t naturally grasp the concept of Accumulation. It has to be learned, but less of us are doing that. Our psychology is that we find ourselves in a hard spot, and then we might start paying attention. Ready, fire, aim. Sadly, only some remember the lesson learned, and even fewer learn it from the mistakes of others.

There’s even an app now to help people become aware of the monthly contracts they willingly signed up for. The ads for the app show various stunned consumers who apparently were not motivated to keep track of how much they owed.

Today it is rare you find someone who knows how many millions are in a billion, and how many billions are in a trillion. This is an instant eye-glazer for many Americans today, who are great at a number of things, but not so great at the numbers thing.

But there's an even bigger problem…

1970 US national government debt: $371 billion.
2025 US national government debt: $36.2 trillion.
Adjusted for inflation, that’s a 1047% increase. The government (you = taxpayer) owes 11 times more than in 1970 and here again, inflation is no excuse.

So the average US consumer is not only three and a half times deeper in Personal debt than in 1970, but *also* 11 times deeper in Taxpayer debt (just to twist the knife 11 more times). Your take-home pay would be a lot more if this were not true. We've just become used to the big bite being taken out of our paycheck burrito before whatever's left is finally handed over to us.

Ok, we (along with those we voted for to spend our money) buy too much stuff beyond our means. But psychologically, why?

Ask your favorite a.i. this question: “Are there any genes or brain differences that predispose a person to being more of an instant gratification thinker?” The short answer is yes. Some, but not all people are wired to have a tougher time fighting specific forms of instant gratification. And one of those forms is Impulse Buying.

Due to the brain's complexity, you can have a high i.q. and still rationalize your way into various undesired behaviors before your prefrontal cortex is sufficiently aware that it wasn't such a good idea after all.

The good news: We're also wired to change our behavior (for example, to start watching how our spending adds up) in the face of Serious Adversity such as losing a job, although many people like Dick and Jane have a tough time with this.

The bad news: Throwing easy credit into the mix postpones the cold-water-in-the-face awakening from Serious Adversity. And then we postpone paying attention to the math at the most critical time we need to do it.

So teach your young kids: If you're going to have a superpower, let it be learning from the mistakes of other

people.

4/29/25 (Substack 4/30/25)

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Compromise

It's important to place more emphasis on what the cognizant elderly say, since they have seen many young people through the years (including themselves) get fooled by short-term fixes. Though I may disagree with a short-term thinker on many issues, I respect that humans live in both the short term and the long term.

In order for the civil society to continue, there has to be a flexibility that allows respect, to a reasonable point, for the thoughts we disagree with. Many of the U.S. founders wrote that they signed the Constitution even though they disagreed with parts of it. They knew it was better to have this document with its faults, than no document at all.

The Constitution provided the legal roadmap for eventually getting rid of slavery, even though many of the founders were slave owners. One lesson to take from the founders is that a person might have some very bad ideas, as well as some very good ones. We should not throw away their good idea because they had a bad one. Use the good one. The old saying "Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater" is applicable here.

I'm not big on having statues of people, such as the US founders, or anyone else for that matter. Eventually we find out some not so pleasant things about them, as time passes. But I am big on extolling the value of certain ideas. Instead of statues, I like the idea of monuments with profound statements on them. It might even be better not to include the author's name, in case something distasteful is discovered later about the author. The idea is what should be admired, and should have a continuing life of its own.

Much social unrest through history has been due to this throwback fallacy tendency to say an idea is bad because a certain person had the idea. This comes from people who are Personality Thinkers. That is, they mix your idea into how they see your personality before they can tell if they like your idea. Instead, ideas should be evaluated like mathematical equations, on their merit alone. Taking the person out of the idea makes it more palatable in some cases.

But even after anonymizing an idea, someone may still disagree with it. This is where you find out if someone is a Big Picture Thinker or Small Picture Thinker. Are they able to see the numerous ways that this idea could work - the times, the places, the incentives, human nature, the new connections between these and more - or do they see only one or two moves ahead in the chess game? 10/31/25

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One Ingredient

To the same degree there is infighting, there will be failure. 12/6/25

End of chapter – Big Picture

Communication

The Less-Than-Perfect Club
Increasingly in the U.S. in the last 50 years, when you try to express a constructive criticism, people assume you're not being constructive with it. Instead, they assume you're trying to be superior to them, no matter how nice you are. I realize there's a fine line with constructive criticism, but this is a definite trend observed over the

decades. So, I probably should wear a tag every day with this disclaimer on it: “I am a card-carrying member of the Less-Than-Perfect Club. However, this does not prevent me from spotting another one of our club members in action, nor from saying anything about it, if only just to make people aware of the shenanigans.” (Substack 7/26/23)

Do Not Be That
Do not be a Book Cover judge. (2007)

Words vs Knowledge
Sometimes our ability to know things, does not measure up to our superior ability to talk about them.

Anger, Passion, Relationships
If you perceive a lack of passionate conversation in your partner and you try to get some kind of passionate response from them by berating them, then you are not only beating a dead horse, but it is likely you are beating a dead horse that has been beat to death. (9/21/20)

Deception
I’ve seen good ideas presented poorly, but mostly I’ve seen bad ideas presented very well.

Greeting
Instead of the reflex “How are you?” it might be more useful to start with “What’s been on your mind?” (2007)

Blame vs. Fault
Blaming divides, and does not build. If someone is at fault, it must be known through calm and humble realization, but not through blaming. When someone appears to have done something wrong, genuinely ask, “What’s happening?” or “What happened?”

My first memorable exposure to this was in the 3rd grade. I had a small camera with the wind-up film inside it (this was about 1966). I had unwittingly exposed the film by not winding it up properly before opening the camera to get it out. The lady at the Kmart photography counter said “It’s been exposed. What happened?” And for some reason this stood out as a great example of someone not automatically blaming another person when something went wrong. Additionally, it’s an example of how just saying the right thing in a casual conversation, can stick with us the rest of their lives. (Substack 7/29/23)

Recording
Always try to communicate as if you are being recorded.

Truisms
Regarding clichés or truisms: they are profound and recurring truths. The people that roll their eyes at clichés are the very ones that need to focus their eyes on them, to see the many daily applications they have in our lives, as a hand fits into a glove. The problem with clichés is not that they get old, it’s that people lose sight of the wisdom behind them.

The blues
The kinds of ideas I really want to share with people, seem to be not all that interesting to them.

Tough Love
If someone wants you to bail them out continuously, go ahead and actually ask them, in conjunction with the old saying:
Should I give you a fish or teach you how to fish? No, really ask them this. Out loud.

Nips
It seems that nowadays people are judging one another on the poorest communication standards. But on further

reflection, this fallacious judgment seems to continue on, more or less throughout history. Why haven't we worked this out over the past 5000 years?
It's one of those timeless mysteries, like the reason people have toenails, or men have nipples.

Could You Do This for Me?

There are people out there who are "over-requesters." They use a kind and friendly tone of voice when asking someone to do something for them, while (1) failing to consider what other people might have on their plates at the moment, and/or (2) failing to consider that the action requested should likely be their responsibility in the first place.

We all might be guilty of this from time to time due to being distracted by something. But when it's chronic there's a pattern there, a pattern perceived by those in frequent contact but not by the infrequent observer.

The over-requester may be aware of this and do it anyway, or may be dimly aware in auto-rationalization mode, or it could be subconscious, or he could be innocently oblivious. In the first 3 cases, it could be some degree of passive aggressiveness. In the 4th, the person would have to be almost an idiot, which is probably not the case.

But we have to allow for another case, that there could be some mental or physical discomfort going on that the requester has just not voiced. At any rate, be careful what you ask other people to do, so you don't end up being perceived like this.

Bureaucracy

When you find out your company has instituted another cumbersome or needless process: "Once again, bureaucracy has reared its ugly head."

Give vs. Want

Teach your children to give instead of want. It's counterintuitive for them. But if you don't teach them this, the world will. And it will be much harder on them to learn it that way. (2007)

An Unexpressed Thought

At times during disagreements, the other person's words may still mean a lot to us, though at times it would be a stress reduction for it not to be so. (2015)

Passive-Aggressive

When someone is being passive aggressive, call their bluff by asking them out loud, "Wait, what did I do wrong here?"

Experience vs Communication

The benefit of having been around several decades is that you get to observe trends first hand that you previously only heard of.

Disagreement

Sometimes people fall under the wrong impression, yet refuse to investigate. Tell them, "I fear you may have been victimized by some misinformation." This might appeal to them because people who refuse to investigate both sides, tend also to enjoy brandishing some type of victimhood as a badge of righteousness.

Healthy Suspicion

When most of the population feel relatively secure, conversations tend to gravitate to small talk, which makes it more difficult for those of us who yearn to talk about avoiding the dangers that lurk ahead. (2017)

Humility

Whenever there's a choice, humility beats humor every time.

Naming your Feelings

Recently I've gone to a higher level of appreciation for the practice of naming your feelings, or putting a verbal label on them. I've written before about this as a way of bringing them out of the dark subconscious into the light so that the conscious can point and say, "Aha! That's what it really is!" So it's a way of finding a solution instead of being led around by these feelings; a way of allowing the left (logical-verbal) brain hemisphere a vote in the decision-making process, as opposed to it being relegated into the rationalization function, where the right (emotional) hemisphere guides it into rationalizing the so-called reasons that you do what you do.

This rationalizing function of the left hemisphere has been documented in experiments with hemisphere-separated patients. But it's even more important than previously thought, to use the left hemisphere's verbal dominance (also well documented) to label these feelings so the self can deal in the light of day with any self-defeating influence that the right hemisphere puts forward. Once these feelings are named, they can more easily be recognized for what they are, and be handed up as a package to God, that He may improve on them for your benefit.

Selective Compassion

Selective compassion is one of the most deceptive hypocrisies. Sometimes it is used by people who believe that giving to others is a zero-sum game, where for every unit of compassion they give to someone, they must take a unit of some advantage from someone else. I believe this may be associated with the psychotic feature known as "splitting", where things and people are either on the good list or the bad list, and there is no in between.

Condescension and False Caring

A type of condescending power play, some people have mastered the art of criticizing someone, under the guise of caring for them. For example, "Send that report every week so everyone knows what to expect" when it is already obvious and you have always sent the report in every week anyway. It may become apparent by the sheer number of occurrences to the familiar person, whereas a casual bystander would not detect it.

Selfishness

Before saying anything, check your selfish meter.

The Sandwichers

There are those who use the "Damned if you do, damned if you don't" concept in conversation. You might feel sandwiched-in by this technique. You strive to be polite and respectful, but when you are reduced to treading a thin line of eggshells just to get along, you may find yourself accused of building a wall of platitudes. So, your efforts are stifled either way.

Some are bent on a win-lose interaction taking place, and will "perspective-shift" from one side of the universe to the other, in order to make it happen. In this situation, you may be tempted to look up to the ceiling for an answer, but it is not written there. Your chess move then should be to do your own perspective-shift into gratitude, which keeps the situation from getting under your skin. (April 2021)

Extremes

One under-estimated concept for couples is that of discussing respectfully, "How much is too much?", regarding most anything, without blaming and finger-pointing.

Been Misinterpreted Lately?

Apparently, it has become a popular thing in the U.S. today that when you say, "This thing might happen", some listeners will react like you said "This thing WILL happen." Also, if you say "Are things happening this way?" they react like you said "Things ARE happening this way" and then will try to hold you to the "assertion" they indicate you have made. Or, if you are asking ABOUT something, they act like you WANT something from them, causing them to have to go to a lot of trouble to fulfill your demand. In other words, it has become popular to misinterpret a person on purpose, in order to make that person appear rude, pushy, and untrustworthy in whatever way possible. And then those same crafty distorters express on various media that other people are being rude to them. Now, I am old enough to remember when it was not this way, during the

20th century and as recent as 2010. So, it is obvious this is some kind of new dopamine power grab. Be on alert so you don't get pulled in. You have to consciously over-emphasize the words "possibly", "probably", "may" and "might", so there's less chance of being intentionally misinterpreted. Unfortunately it's almost like having to learn a new language. **(2020)** (Substack 2023)

Hormones
Do some people use language to get a dopamine buzz, while others use other types of language to go for the oxytocin comfort?

Social Trends in Communication
The types of things that a mind like mine likes to say, are just not popular in America today. (2016)

All Day
If your boss were to ask you, "But what have you been doing all day?" you might possibly reply, "To explain in accurate detail what I've been doing all day, would take half a day in itself." Then smile.

Blame
The urge to blame others is something that we must let go of, on the journey to humility. Common use of the word "blame" today includes a selfish level of emotion that the word "accountability" does not. Hold accountable, but do not blame. Granted, "hold accountable" is not as catchy as "blame" and it takes more time to say it. But that helps make my point: Selfishness is consistent with style over substance and laziness over accuracy.

Sometimes others are at fault, and it is especially upsetting when these others blame you for something that they have done. In this case, your reputation as may be on the line, and thus your ability to earn a future paycheck may be affected by this misplaced blame. Still, a good rule is "Do not disparage others if at all possible." If you must defend yourself, say simply and genuinely "I have reasons for disagreeing with that" and let others ask you about those reasons, if they prefer. This helps you avoid the perception of "protesting too much". If others are not interested in asking the reasons behind your disagreement, they will more likely be seen as the unfair ones by others, and maybe seen as unfair in their own minds, if they have any fair degree of conscience.

But all this "being seen as" is just the tip of the iceberg. The deeper point is that in genuine humility you are attempting fairness, not dominance. However, if it comes down to it and you must implicate someone else in order to properly defend yourself, see it as a last resort. Strike a fine balance: Be genuinely reluctant to gloat or dominate, yet at the same time do not demean yourself, nor agree with those who might demean you. In other words, use the power of calm unyielding determination. People can read this and they know what it means. (Substack 5/22/23)

Compassion
Quiet people quite often express their compassion in action, not words, and this should not be mistaken for lack of compassion, by those to whom words are everything.

Disagreement, Respect
Ways to disagree respectfully:
"My sense of what's best in the big picture and the long run won't let my conscience go along with that. So, the decision is yours."
"I apologize in advance for not being able to find the smoothest and best sounding words but I must say this now…"

Emotion vs. Reason
Regardless of our feelings or how good somebody's words sound, the numbers in the bank account don't change and neither do the number of hours in the day.

And
Sometimes, people are just so into the emotional rush they are having, you can't talk reasonably with them. You just have to wait until their episode is done.

Calm
In my desire not to be passive and not let people fall under the wrong impression, I sometimes speak with too much volume, or I act impulsively without calmly communicating beforehand. Always take the chance to communicate something calmly.

Words vs. Reality
Words to me are important only in the sense that they may be connected to a pertinent reality: a physical reality, or a spiritual reality. Otherwise, they just disappear into the atmosphere.

Words vs. Facts
For some people, words don't automatically tend to spill over into the realm of facts.

Premise of the Question
Sometimes during a conversation, you may need to reply: "The question indicates that the questioner is under the wrong impression, and is insinuating a falsehood where there is none".

Hedging Your Bet
"Not Always" is such an undervalued concept that I talked my wife into embroidering it on a t-shirt, underneath a Venn diagram.

People who communicate in Absolutes (words like "always", "never", etc.) with regard to the physical world, are more likely to overstate or understate things, and to perpetuate disagreements.

Let's say 2 people are discussing whether a certain TV channel promotes lies. Person A says "That channel always promotes lies." Person B says "I think it promotes lies about 10% of the time."

There could be a misunderstanding of what "always" means. Definitions themselves are often the basis of disagreements.

To get to the definition of "always", person B should ask "Do you mean this channel promotes lies every single day or do you mean every single thing they promote is a lie?"

Once person A makes this choice, the debaters are on the same page at least, and can then search for any available stats to try and prove their points.

But as you might see now, proving that a channel promoted a lie every single DAY might be easier than proving that every STATEMENT it promotes is a lie. This starts to show the fragility of an "always" or "100%" type of argument.

When observers hear "always", they believe it means "every single day, every single occurrence, every single way." So if person B can get person A to clarify which one of these he means by "always", person B has made some headway into dismantling the "always" argument.

This is why the word "sometimes" is one of the most underrated words ever used, along with other "Hedge" terms such as "maybe", "possibly", "probably", "mostly", "likely" or "unlikely", "usually" and many others. (11.26.25)

Advice
Over the decades you may have learned generally what works and what doesn't, but sometimes you cannot gift that knowledge directly to your loved one, because for whatever reason, the mere act of attempting it, alienates them from accepting knowledge from you, present and future. (Like Jesus experienced when returning to Nazareth - you can't preach where you live.) So you may have to settle for the "planting the seed" method, where you mention it in such a way that they may one day figure it out.

Disagreement
When someone has their say, but refuses to let you have yours, calmly reply (if you get a chance): "If you

don’t listen to someone else’s viewpoint, then how can you expect them to listen to yours?” Or, if they listen, yet expect you to agree with them, say “How can you expect someone to have an open mind when the real expectation is to submit to your view?”

If there's a stalemate, the best alternative may be to disagree respectfully. If other observers are present, you might say "We each have our own mutually respected opinions on that."

Blame

Before you blurt out blame, ask what’s going on.

Persuasion vs Coercion

I have a theory that one difference between long-term and short-term thinkers, is that one seeks to draw as many people as possible to their team, while the other seeks to force as many people as possible to their team. (8/26/20)

Condolences

What are “the Words that Soothe”? It would be a great book title, useful for those who are trying to comfort others in hard times but find themselves at a loss for words. There are already such books I am sure, but since I work in hospice, it might be good to ask for input especially from a number of hospice chaplains.

Listening vs Agreeing

Someone may say, “You’re not listening!” You might say to them calmly, “I’m listening and there’s a big difference between listening and agreeing.” The person who says “You’re not listening” is self-centric, thinking that “Of course you would agree with me, if only you heard what I say.”

Eye for an Eye

You may get into a conversation with someone who believes in the figurative principle of “an eye for an eye” even when the person who took the first eye has already departed from their human life. You might respond to them, “Then what innocent person’s eye will be taken?” (2021)

Fallacies

Certain language can be used to make the light bulb come on in the listener’s mind. As a listener, you must be watchful to separate this phenomenon from provable fact, so that you are not surreptitiously deceived. One useful tool is to become familiar with the classic Logical Fallacies recognized in the art of debate. I recall going over these with my children when I home schooled them for a time.

Passive aggressiveness

Passive aggressiveness is invisible only as long as the victim stays silent. However, the victim requires skill in calling the perpetrator’s bluff, so that the victim does not make himself look like an active aggressor. This skill-failure by the victim is another reason passive aggressiveness is so successful. The victim must remember the warning of William Penn’s words: “Truth often suffers more by the heat of its defenders than from the arguments of its opposers” (1693) or those of Shakespeare: “The lady doth protest too much” (1599-1601). Also heed the advice of Edmund Burke (1796): “..there is an economy of truth. It is a sort of temperance, by which a man speaks truth with measure that he may speak it the longer.”

Underlying Presumption

Sometimes we might summarize a person’s problematic communication style, in order to follow the principle that to solve a problem, you must first define it. For example, we may say: “His/Her communication often presumes that I am inferior in some way, either Ignorant or Arrogant.”

Labels

Sometimes, finding a catchy sticky label for someone or something, is like a brand of fire upon it, in the eyes of many in the public. Some politicians are accomplished at this. Of course like anything, this concept can be used

or abused, but I like to use it because a label can make a light bulb come on in the minds of many, regarding some dimly lit or under-realized concept. It is one way to call BS on something that people just automatically assume to be correct.

Short of Reason
You can describe crazy talk as “beyond reason”. But the phrase “beyond reason” sort of feels like in a way that it means “greater than reason”, so it may speak to the heart better if we use the phrase “far short of reason” (especially if we say it in a proper British accent). (7/14/20)

Blaming the Listener
Sometimes the problem is people not communicating properly, then blaming the listener for not perceiving the right message.

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Solutions
When discussing problems, a common tactic is to ask “Well what do you propose we do about it?” which might really mean “You can’t be right unless you have the solution.”

Don’t fall into this trap. We can all see problems even if there’s no solution right then.

If you have no solution, just reply “Well, we don’t have to know what to do about it, to see that there’s a problem but this is where we work on finding one.”

However, if the questioner simply asks “What do you think could be done about it?”, then he may genuinely be asking your opinion in a respectful way. The two questions are very similar but usually you can tell the difference.

Also, if you do have a solution, shouting it from the rooftops may shoot your solution in the foot, so finding the most effective avenue is the next step.

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Handy phrases
The time may possibly arise to utilize these statements:
“I’m striving to find the happy balance between reason and emotion”.
“Just because reality is upsetting, doesn’t mean we can take a vacation from dealing with it.” (Although on second thought this one is provocative and may do more harm than good, depending on the situation.)

A Good Substitute
It may be useful to refer to the disorganized mess in the house simply as “chaos”, such as, “That cabinet is full of chaos”. Or refer to a person on TV, “He’s full of chaos”.

Aggressive vs. Assertive
It has long been said, “Not to speak, is to speak” and I might add, “Not to speak for your side is to speak for the other side.”
Unfortunately, when you refuse to stand your verbal ground with a verbal aggressor, they sometimes see this as weakness and will see you as an easy target and will step up their attacks. (1) Learn to spot this type of personality early and (2) avoid talking with them if at all possible.

Sensitivity, Blame
When you have an agreement with your roommate for the last person to leave the house to take the trash to the

street, and they didn't do it so the trash piled up, the best thing for you to calmly say when you get home is "What happened?" because there may be something you don't know yet, that led to it. If you say "We've got to get the trash out on time next time", even though this statement is forward looking and blameless, they may be the type of person who perceives blame for past actions where there is none, and an argument ensues.

Bad Assumption vs Good Assumption

When you're listening to someone, the moment your "I know this already" impulse gives way to "He may add something I don't know" is a moment of increased wisdom.

Evidence-Based Communication

When writing an article or making a statement, and when there is not enough time to do a lot of research for it, announce from the beginning that this is an opinion, and make sure to often include phrases such as "possibly" and ask "will the research bear this out" and "remember that many studies have been shown to be flawed" and "the number of studies reaching the same conclusion is important". And keep in mind the Small Picture Thinker (SPT) mindsets of most academic researchers today.

Passive-aggressiveness (1)

Passive aggressiveness takes many forms. I believe sometimes people dispense it unwittingly from their hearts, with their minds unaware. Either way, one form is where the dispenser traps a busy person into a polite sounding conversation he can't politely get out of, even though he has much to do and his job may depend on moving quickly on to the next thing. The dispenser might even say "Sorry to bother you" as an additional power grab.

In this case, the person who is trapped should say "I'm sorry, I promised someone I would do something on time and I'm about to run late for it." This is not a lie because most job descriptions include the word "timely" and if not, timeliness is pretty much strongly implied in the vast majority of work contracts.

If it's not a work situation, the statement is likely still true because someone is probably counting on him to complete some duties in a timely manner.

Passive-aggressiveness (2)

It's one thing for person A to kindly offer something to person B, and then graciously accept a "no thank you" answer from person B. It's quite another for A to try and convince B why he's wrong for saying "no thank you".

For example, if B has made up his mind he's voting a certain way and says "no thank you" to some incriminating information about his party as offered by A, then that "no thank you" should be respected, whether the information is grounded in evidence or not.

All this may seem to be obvious etiquette, but when there is a continual nudging using polite-sounding suggestions as to why you're wrong, you may be dealing with someone who desires power, and has found a stealthy, low level, "under the radar" vehicle for it.

For example, person A keeps offering you some unhealthy food even though you have refused it many times before, explained the reasoning behind it, and your explanations were summarily dismissed, sweetly belittled, or ignored as though you don't really know what's good for you, but this person does. Certainly, the person "just offered you some food, what's the big deal?" You must be an overbearing patriarchal ogre to refuse.

No, the magnitude lies in the accumulation of countless small interactions, not one big single obvious interaction at one time. It's like person A is digging a tunnel with a pick ax, picking away small amounts over a very long period of time, unnoticed, underground, until he has made it under your border, under your skin, and although you felt the tunnel being dug, no one else from the outside was there to detect every chip of the rock.

This brand of passive-aggressiveness is made even more stealthy by the fact that people often save the unsavory parts of their personality for certain others who seem to be easy targets and won't retaliate, so that if you mention this pattern to anyone, it will probably be met with "Really, I've never seen that".

The proper way to deal with this is not to become angry, because then the passive-aggressor gets to claim the gold in today's society: Victimhood. If this occurs, the passive-aggressor then opens up to their acquaintances with their (incomplete) side of the story. And of course, a little dash of exaggeration makes it even spicier.

The way to respond is to be assertive, not aggressive. Be polite, thank the passive-aggressor for offering to

help, but don’t shirk on addressing the issue. You are the true victim here, but you don’t want to use your victimhood for personal gain, so you simply ask that your “no thank you” be respected.

Passive Aggressiveness (3)
I become more convinced that many people have the ability to talk in very genuine and humble ways, while their actions, whether purposeful or unwitting, totally belie their words. It's why the old saying "Actions speak louder than words" became an old saying. It's also why George Washington emphasized “deeds, not words.”

Opinions
If a verifiable fact is not believed because it’s offensive to someone, they’ve got a problem - and - if a person doesn’t know how to tell the difference between a fact and an opinion, they have another problem. We can politely offer to help such a person but if he refuses, that's probably bigger than the other 2 problems.

Opinions (2)
A great movie line might be "You can say I'm wrong, but that doesn't make me wrong unless you've got proof or you're God. So which is it?" However, in real life, this would be a self-defeating antagonistic approach that doesn't turn out well in actual conversations. So much for Hollywood.

Past Blame vs Future Solution
When you're speaking with someone and mention something that appears to be causing a problem, some listeners tend to jump to the assumption that they are somehow being blamed for it. If you are knowingly speaking with one of these people, you may find it useful to use the phrase “Going forward, we might could” do this thing or that, etc., to take the focus off of thinking of the past which often includes blame. Other phrases: “There’s no blame here, we’re just reviewing facts in order to find a solution.”

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Parental Guidance Suggested

One of the difficult things about being a dad is that your children may see helpful advice as criticism. This involves (1) the sensitivity of the child, and (2) the sternness of the dad. Both of these vary by person and situation, so it’s impossible to get the ball over both of these constantly moving goal lines every time.

We already know there are dads out there who are often too harsh and usually do more harm than good. Others slip into that mode occasionally and unintentionally, by being negligent at times. Some always avoid any sternness, even to the point of giving little or no advice, but this often ends up spoiling the child to some degree. Of course even if you are not stern, repeating the same advice too many times has a numbing effect and causes increased eye-rolling, thereby undoing any good it may have accomplished at first. (“Methinks he doth profess too much.”) Some dads give advice in a gentle way, and when it doesn’t work, they get a little more stern every time, to a point. This is probably the best approach but as noted, won’t always be perfect.

These times where is it less than perfect can be heart-wrenchers. You may have thought you were not being stern but the child perceived it as harsh. Guilt may cause you to ask, “Should I just stop giving any advice at all?” No, you know this would be the same as giving up on the child. Reaching this point, I personally decided to go ahead and continue to give advice while keeping in mind those moving goal lines, with the hope and belief that there will be continued improvement with continued striving. I believe that speaking up respectfully has a long-term benefit even if it may sometimes be a short-term negative. As Fyodor Dostoevsky once wrote: “Much unhappiness has come into the world because of bewilderment and things left unsaid.” (8/29/23) (Substack 8/30/23)

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Integrity
People who are passive-aggressive have an integrity gap between what they do and say.

Do Numbers Lie?

Real numbers don't lie, but people can lie about the numbers. They do this by leaving out where there could be bias behind them, by leaving out other numbers (cherry-picking or lying by omission), by flavoring them with words that make them taste different than they really are, and other techniques including outright fabrication of numbers which can mislead many people who won't ever hear the correction, if there ever is one.

To get at the truth, and see around the bias, three things stand out: 1) how often the numbers can be replicated by different experimenters or surveyors, 2) greater accuracy with greater sample size, and 3) the reputation of those who give the numbers. These are the most important things I learned from taking "Experimental Methodology" and "Statistics in Psychology" in college.

But of course, there are other ways that bias can be built into the design of a study or survey, including improper omission or commission, improper word or concept definition, well-hidden assumption, etc.

Unfortunately, the media doesn't look for all this. But I would at least consider the main three mentioned above, every time you hear of some study or survey results. (Substack 8/28/23) (**revised 11/27/25**)

Hindsight
Mostly, hindsight should be used with a focus on doing the right thing next time, not to bludgeon someone with blame for not doing it this time. Use it to move forward, not back. Unfortunately, when you mention a past negative occurrence to someone, and your intentions are to look forward to doing better next time, they might still assume that you are blaming. Such is the case increasingly nowadays, so make sure you are far beyond clear about your intentions. (Substack 8/28/23) **(revised 11/27/25)**

Clichés
Clichés must sometimes be reformulated into new analogies to make them pertinent to the young (who are still learning), or to the old and hard-headed.

Rudeness
In football there's the penalty of unnecessary roughness. It makes me want to carry a penalty flag and throw it on the ground and declare "unnecessary rudeness" in some situations.

Yo

You may know someone who's in a relationship where they feel their heart is being played with up and down on a string like a yo-yo. They may seem neutral, flat, and disconnected; fatigued by being pulled from loving conversation one minute to highly disrespectful conversation the next.

The person in control gets no thrill when the yo-yo is still, either cradled in the hand or hanging at the end of its string, so he keeps it moving. The person being played with here needs help in realizing that their real worth is in the spirit, and God protects your spirit forever.

Venting vs. Interrupting
Sometimes you may see a situation where "talking" may be redefined as "venting" when person A does it, but it is "interrupting" when person B does it.

Blame
To automatically lay blame on the speaker for when the listener does not understand, is folly.

Clue
If there's one thing I'm a little wary of, it's when someone starts a sentence with the word "Look" when there's not anything nearby they want you to look at. It's kind of like they're saying "You need to start paying attention." (12/3/23)

Parables, Analogies
No analogy is perfect. This means that no analogy is a perfect match to an actual occurrence for which the analogy is meant to shed light upon. Otherwise, it wouldn't be an analogy. But analogies are extremely useful in helping someone's light bulb come on. That's why Jesus often spoke in parables, which are perfect in their applications.

Gossip
Remember the game we played as kids, where everyone sits in a circle and one person whispers a message in another's ear, then that person is supposed to whisper the same message in the next person's ear, and it continues around until the message gets back to the original person, to see how the message changed in the process. Some call the game "Broken telephone". I call it the "Grapevine Distortion" effect (because of the old saying "heard it through the grapevine"). Adults play this now more than kids ever did, but for power, which is the grown-up fun for some.

Motivation, Children
If your kids are disappointed that you don't buy them everything they want, ask them, "Why would I rob you of the motivation to work hard, so that one day you can make your own money?" Now if someone were to step in and say "Oh you don't know what you're talking about," then in my particular case, I could say, "Yes I do because I lived it, and it took me 10 years to realize it."

Troubleshooter
Regarding my interactions with others: I am by nature a troubleshooter, always looking for a potential trouble spot. I'm one of those people that starts to shine when things are not going well for the group. My talents are suddenly in demand then. But I need to learn to shine a little more when things are going well, and not feel so out of place. I think the answer lies in giving the entire situation up to God and thanking Him for it, instead of feeling like a fish out of water.

Hens' Teeth
Interesting phenomenon - In the long run I have found that it's better to be over-questioning, insisting on greater clarity, even when there's some repetition, because often during the extra questioning, people think of different things and some important new information often emerges. This is probably why this technique is often seen in the courts. Even rewording the same question differently might gain some new information. This may cause some irritation in your conversational partner, but on balance I have seen it work out better for the most part, instead of playing fast and loose with words and information, and being overly assuming which has come back to bite me in the butt more often than not. (Substack 12/3/23)

Unfair Interruption
When someone interrupts you, say "Be fair, let me finish that sentence please." Insertion of the word "fair" provides an element that could just make their lightbulb come on.

Insecurity
One way you can tell if someone is insecure, is when you thank them for helping, they give a response that seems to indicate "Well why wouldn't I help? Are you surprised that I'm actually helping?" Although they would not go so far as to use these exact words. (3/13/21)

Guilty or Innocent
You may happen upon a situation where someone gets irritated at you because of their own miscommunication. You may be able to make yourself understood by the vast majority of people, but not this one person. And if it's a frequent occurrence, there are at least 3 possible reasons for their misinterpretations:
1. Innocence: The person is simply not cognitively able to figure out nor grasp why they have misunderstood someone's communication.
2. Second Degree Negligent Misinterpretation: The person is not putting forth the effort to properly understand

the other person's communication.
3. First Degree Intentional Misinterpretation: The person is doing it on purpose.
(3/19/21)

Like a Rock
With the dropping i.q. of the average person, the art of summarizing a complicated topic in a catchy way, has never been more important. (2/28/21)

Slipped In an Assumption
I've noticed a pattern. Increasingly, in a conversation when someone is making a point, the speaker will hit the listener with various assumptions in rapid fire style, giving the listener no time to sort them out or respond to them. It's a type of bluff.

For the listener, the trick is not to get tricked into passively accepting the assumption, during the process of simply trying to follow what the speaker is saying. In other words, one of those stepping stones in the pond might be an alligator's back.

The listener might have to blurt out, "Unproven assumption" in the middle of the speaker's tirade. This might cause the speaker to pause long enough so that the listener could ask "What stats or examples do you have, showing that this is widespread?" (4/29/21). (Substack 4/20/23)

4/20/23 update: Interestingly, Elon Musk used this technique on 4/11/23 with a BBC reporter, which resulted in a widely viewed clip.

Sometimes
There is a commonly used practice (at least in the English language) where the words "mostly", "sometimes", "often", "basically", and other similar qualifiers are just omitted altogether. I think it comes from people assuming that if you use one of these "matter of degree" qualifiers, that it waters down the point you are trying to make.

To me, the omission actually muddies the point by falsely inserting an all-or-none aspect, which is often not accurate. However, I do use this omission sometimes because it seems like increasingly, many listeners have come to feel that you don't quite believe in your own entire statement, if you use a matter-of-degree qualifier.

For example, I might say "Jim Smith is a good person". Most people know that as a human, Jim is not perfect and will have done something wrong in his life.

But if I say "Jim Smith is basically a good person", the popular assumption now is for the listener to think "Oh, he said 'basically' - I wonder what bad thing Jim might have done recently." And so continues the erosion of language with regard to logic and universal clear meaning, as many in our society take their first 3 levels of Maslow's hierarchy for granted & now drift into entertainment by tweaking things that aren't broken. Lord help us.

Big Picture Insult
If person A tosses person B a slightly derogatory comment in public, any bystanders might just figure it's a one-off mistake. However, the sheer number of occurrences person B has endured over time may indicate that it's an intentional insult. (April 2021)

Insecurity
Some people with the "victim mentality" vacillate between provocation and accusation. They may provoke by continually nudging their target until he frustratedly says "please stop", at which point they use language indicating their target is targeting them, and that their target is either unintelligent or arrogant. If the target gets wise and refuses to continue this perpetual interaction of win/lose, the victim mentality player may then refuse to enter into any other type of interaction at all, so strong is this mentality tied into their sense of self. (4/19/21)

Pants on Fire
One debate technique: If your opponent is lying, then you may tell an obvious lie and when they call you on it, you may reply "I'm fighting fire with fire." (6/23/21)

Intentional
Sometimes people are so wrong, you know *they* know exactly what they're doing. In other words: It's impossible to be *that* wrong by accident. (8/13/21)

I'm Just Saying
Sometimes we hear someone who is saying things about what others are saying when they are saying this person should do this and that, as if the words themselves had any authority or motivation built into them. All this saying about saying and expecting saying to make it happen, are doing nothing. In this world, words are only fragile smudges on paper, groups of tiny low charge pixels, or small amounts of warm vibrating air that disappear quickly into the atmosphere, unless there's some physical reality backing them up. (9/1/21) (Substack 5/13/24)

Diffuse It
When someone indicates you have done something wrong and you know you haven't, the worst you can do is "protest too much" which makes you look guilty. Calmly respond "Quite often, there are at least two sides to a story" and leave it at that. They may then be disappointed they haven't gotten underneath your skin.

False Endearment
Why is it a popular thing to use a term of endearment, or to use someone's name, as a verbal condescension weapon against them? For example, in past relationships I have heard things like "Honey, you know that's not going to happen, we talked about that, don't you remember?" People can deal with those statements as long as they don't contain the power-play pseudo-affectionate use of what is supposed to be a term of endearment. Solution: When this happens, call them on it directly: "Why use a term of endearment in a statement designed to make me look like I did something wrong?"

Sounded Good At The Time
You may eventually find the need to use this sentence: "It was one of those things where the words sounded good when somebody had the idea, and the way to get it done was not seriously thought about." (9/19/21) (Substack 9/30/23)

More Cooperation
Counterintuitively, the concept of openly & respectfully trading opinions, especially when those opinions disagree, constitutes more cooperation than the holding back of those opinions in the name of manners. (12/25/21)

You Don't Even Have to Say It
In corporations, governments, & other groups, & even between one person & another, there are such things as "complying with a hint" or "complying with the unspoken". (2/7/22)

Creep
One way that language can be used to deceive, is like this: You might say "The purpose of a car is to take people from point A to point B." Sounds reasonable. But someone else might say "No, that's wrong. The purpose of a car is to take people, and things, from point A to point B."

The problem lies in our everyday automatic assumptions about certain words. More accurately the first person should have said "*One* purpose of a car is to take people from point A to point B." This is about the absolutism that tends to creep into our conversations because it makes us sound more certain and thus more authoritative and correct. The truth is, it often causes us to be incorrect. (March 2022)

Say or Do
On occasion, you might find an opportunity to remark, "He can say anything because saying anything is not doing anything." (3/1/22)

Don’t Go Down That Road
Be acutely aware of just a hint in the air, or a subtle inkling that something you say might possibly offend someone, because it most definitely will. (3/5/22)

The People
It’s much more accurate to say “the people who work in government” or “the people who work in corporations” than to say “the government” or “the corporations”. Including the word “people” gives the more realistic picture that neither one is more virtuous than the other. (5/12/22)

Do Works Match Words?
Some don’t seem to understand: What you call something is not always what it is. This is how many people are fooled by the names of the bills that are introduced into congress. (5/19/22)

What’s Your Source?
People have difference sources of richness in their lives. Your preferred source can change. One of mine now is talking about abstract things, associations between them, and how to promote or avoid them. (7/30/22)

Unusual Method
Some power players use some unusual methods of communication. One is the person who either plays the sad victim or plays up their victimhood past a reasonable point. And when there is no clear aggressor against them, they will play or overplay as a victim of chance: “Keep looking at this lousy hand I’ve been dealt!”

Some may even play dumb to the point that it invites mockery in those so inclined, or to the point that it irritates others, nudging them to voice their irritation. When such mockery, ridicule, and irritation are voiced, this is when the sad victim power player wins.

Mocking, although tempting fun, is inconsistent with a clean conscience, and upon hearing it, some will switch over and begin empathizing with the fake victim, feeing that the mocker's side no longer has the moral case. Most people will tend to side with a perceived victim, and even a mocker may experience an annoying feeling of cognitive dissonance afterward.

In essence, the sad victim power player is saying, “Go ahead & say something bad about me. Then others will come to my side or at the very least, your own conscience will get you.” This is the power in their play. Therefore, call out excess when you see it, but don’t fall prey to the temptation of mockery and ridicule, which destroys the point you are trying to make.

-or-

The short version:
When communicating about those who overplay their victimhood, call out excess for what it is, but resist the temptation to mock or ridicule, because this moves observers to the player's side, and at the very least it causes an unsettling cognitive dissonance in the minds of many who fall prey to this temptation. (8/4/22)

Idea Flow
There was a study done long ago where two groups of people were told to come up with ideas on how to get a project done. One group was told to come up with any ideas whatsoever, no matter how crazy-sounding or "outside the box". The other group was told to screen out any far-fetched ideas and present only the ideas that seemed the most realistic (inside the box). In the end, the first group ended up with the most productive ideas.

Unfortunately, today in the U.S. people are so emotionally attached to their positions that they will often shut down an idea because they didn’t think of it, or because they don’t like the person who thought of it. This overboard emotionality is limiting our productivity as a country. So, in order to navigate these shallower waters, you have to be excruciatingly careful not to offend the easily offended, in order for your idea to even be considered. The fact that you even have to use this painstaking care, smacks of boot-licking and limits the free flow of ideas. It’s infuriating.

These situations can range from the mildly annoying to the blatantly illegal. Somewhere in between the two, you may opt to bail out, but don’t become bitter.

Transmogrify that situation into a life lesson where you paid your tuition. Now you have learned what to do next time. However, this works only if you are not one of those who attaches your self-worth to the quicksand words and actions of others, but instead realizes you can in fact attach your self-worth to your higher power, who never changes. (7/28/23)

Yep
Considering that the larger the number of people in a scientific study, the more reliable it tends to be, “anecdotal evidence” is an oxymoron. (8/26/22)

Fossils
I have thought of this “One Dad’s Notes” as a baton that can be passed on to future generations, but I also look at it like a fossil collection that I pass along. Some ideas are more elegant and complete than others. All are thoughts that probably recur in the minds of people for countless generations, in slightly different words. But the more of them that are saved & studied, the more future generations stand to gain. (8/2/22)

Communication Subtopic: Assumption

Assumption
What are “the Great Unspokens” - things we usually assume, so never question nor speak about? I hope to be addressing some of them herein.

Slipping in the Assumption
Often people will slip assumptions into their arguments, hoping their debate partner will slip on them. If you happen to find yourself in a debate, even if you're just yelling at a video, you may find it useful to reply, “Let’s examine the various parts of that statement for any assumptions that may be embedded and unspoken.” Of course then you must be ready to find the assumptions in their statement.

Misinterpretation
Assuming the worst about someone: Anyone’s misinterpretation can be described in an eloquent and persuasive sounding word flow. It’s up to the listener to demand the facts, because often the speaker is convinced that he's beyond reproach.

Conflict Avoidance
I recall previously being in a relationship where I noticed this pattern: There was less conflict when I was cordial, reserved, and quiet, & more conflict when I was openly & respectfully expressing some heartfelt opinions.

I found that with some people, a relationship has to be a win-lose situation, for some deep-rooted psychological reason. Their partner is seen as the opponent, not on the same team, regardless of how unobtrusive he tries to be.

The person stuck in "win-lose" may often use tactics of disrespectful communication such as interrupting, ignoring, disinterest, yelling, assuming the worst (which is an art unto itself), and others. The innocent person, however, should continue to take the high road, with a heart being fueled by a deeper satisfaction that this situation is only a blink of an eye, and the knowledge that God protects our souls forever.

Assuming the Worst Meaning
While the concept of “Assuming the Worst” has its positive uses, as when making a battle plan, it can be misused. Some people often assume the worst about what you say, and assume you are persecuting them or burdening them in some way.

“Assuming the worst” often involves assuming the other person is either ignorant or arrogant. Unfortunately,

almost anything anyone says can be stretched unrealistically to connect two unconnectable points, especially if the assumer has been practicing this art for a number of years. They may be so good at it that they are adept at flying just barely under the conversational radar.

It's a form of passive-aggressiveness. However, I propose a new art of respectfully calling their bluff, although this too would require much practice, in order not to come off as the offender, when you are actually the defender.

Assuming the Worst - Just One

One technique of "assuming the worst meaning" is when you ask someone a question and they give an answer, but they have misunderstood your reason for asking. You attempt to clarify by stating "Well the reason I was asking was…"

Their next move is to assume & imply that you're asking the same question again, and that you are of less than average intelligence for doing so. (8/14/22)

Galileo

With regard to the assumers that use so-called common sense as their evidence, I say you are like the flat-earthers 600 years ago. Where's your proof? Where's the Galileo on your side?

In this physical world, common sense is needed, but it is not proof. Proof is needed as well. It is common sense to seek proof before making an assumption, and if there is no proof, then don't give the assumption a belief of 100%. Assign your belief somewhere between 0% and 99%. (1/30/23)

(End of Communication Sub-topic: Assumption)

When the Truth is On Your Side

When someone insists they told you something and you're sure they did not, you might reply, "Well what was my response when you said that?" If they say "I don't remember" then you might say "Then how can one of us be expected to remember and the other one not?" Or if they reply, "You didn't say anything" then you might say "Then I didn't hear you". Of course, the possibility still exists that they will also fabricate a response that you are supposed to have given. In this case, you can deny that response with an unparalleled degree of genuineness, since you are sticking with the truth. (10/16/22)

Word Balance

In an unofficial debate, the tough balance is to be profound yet respectful. At times, may be tempting to season your words with a just a dash of sternness in order to bold print your statement. But this can have an undoing effect by causing some heel-digging on the part of your conversational partner.

On the other hand, if you have a fear of being offensive, you don't want to be so bland that the profoundness of your message is lost, and eyes quickly turn away.

Unusual words, and command of a larger vocabulary may cause your listener's interest to accelerate so that your presentation grabs attention without being offensive. However, keep in mind that some will be offended by a profoundly righteous statement regardless, and you can't stifle everything because of them. (1/6/23) (Substack 5/5/23) (edited **12/6/25**)

Storyteller

An actor is not a hero, but is the storyteller of the hero. However, telling the story is of great importance, just as a messenger has the important task of transmitting the stories of heroes, so that the heroic inspiration may be spread far and wide. (1/29/23)

Several Catalysts

When thinking of admirable personality characteristics that we should emulate, several come to mind such as humility, respectability, pleasant mood, and helpfulness. But in conversations, try to be helpful by working to build a knowledge base between you and your conversational partner through the free and pleasant and respectful exchange of ideas.

Remember that even difficult subjects can be addressed in the milieu of respect and pleasant helpfulness, although, like everything a human does, there is a point at which something can be overdone. Keeping this in mind also is a guiding principle of respect, which should become more intuitional with further practice. (1/29/23)

Heel-Digging
Overdoing your attempts at persuasion simply causes heel-digging on the part of the person you are trying to convince. (1/30/23) (This basic concept of heel-digging already used in Substack)

Seasoned Greetings
One way to turn a commonly ignored greeting into a signal that you really care, is placing verbal emphasis on the word "today", as in "How are you *today*?" Another way is something that's not often said: "What's been on your mind?" (**2/4/23**) (Substack 12.1.25)

Polite
In cordial conversations with acquaintances, be full of compliments, cheer, and encouragement. Be constantly searching in your mind what might possibly be offensive in any way to your conversational partners, and avoid like the plague any loose kidding around, or anything even semi-negative, no matter how amusing a joke it might make at the time. (2/26/23)

Belie
If pressed to give a yes or no answer, you might reply "Yes or no would belie the whole truth." (3/8/23)

Not Pushing
Some people may indicate that you are "pushing" an idea when you are simply presenting an idea. I have found it useful to reply that I am only putting this idea on the table for consideration, take it or leave it, or I am placing it in a display case for observation. No purchase necessary. (3/8/23)

This World
If I'm going to contribute anything significant to the world, I don't expect it will have anything to do with any material wealth or my personality. So I just hope someone may be helped by these thoughts that I write down. (4/9/23)

Mutual
When you and your partner are talking about things to go and do together, it's better to make great efforts to find something you both like, instead of saying "This time I'll do whatever you want, then I get to pick next time," which results in one person not enjoying the outing. (2023)

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Watch Out
Sometimes it helps to put a catchy label on an abstract concept. It makes it clearer to see, more solid in your mind. And you feel like you have a handle on it.

Having said that, there is a type of deception that I think is on the rise in recent years. For the sake of making it more concrete, I'll call it Sheer Amount & Weight deception. One example is where the fine print in a contract belies the Sheer Amount & Weight of the words a person tells you. It's nothing new, but the label gives us a better starting point here.

Unfortunately, Sheer Amount & Weight deception is increasingly sneaking into conversations and public statements as well. An example is where the words spoken give you an overwhelming impression that XYZ is true. But the person was careful to slip the word "probably" into his verbal onslaught, so later he can say "I never said it was definite."

I'm a big fan of open-ended words such as "probably" and "sometimes". These open-ended words are often more accurate and are not the problem here. The problem is the speaker conducting and constructing a deception with the Sheer Amount & Weight of words in his statement, the gale wind force of his argument in one direction, while giving himself a one-word escape route in the other direction.

The tendency is to blame the open-ended words or the spoken fine print, when the real deception is in the Sheer Amount and Weight of words to the contrary. (Substack 4/26/23)

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The Lost Treasure of Respectful Disagreement

I recall hearing that in one major U.S. city in the 1960's, defense lawyers and prosecutors would routinely engage in heated debates in the courtroom, but then go out and have a few drinks together later the same evening (1). This was not play-acting in court. They were seriously arguing their strongly held positions, based on what they each believed should be the best outcome.

By today's standards, that might seem hypocritical. How could you throw away your beliefs so quickly, just to go out partying with someone? The answer is that they did not throw away their beliefs, and today's standards are overly simplistic and selfish.

Many of these people had served in World War II. As of this writing, World War II was the last time in American history where the vast majority of the population were fully behind the war effort. Millions who were not in the military made sacrifices on a scale not made since then. Many were in grave fear of military attacks on U.S. soil, where loved ones could be killed or captured.

Most people are born with an instinct to fight for something, and against something else. This instinct is strongly connected to our hearts. So early in the war, in the vast majority of Americans, this fear of death and pain solidified into a stern determination to put aside any differences and band together to fight.

After the war was over, the hearts of Americans still contained this intensified new broad teamwork cohesion. For years afterwards, it gave them a deep remembrance that if push came to shove, in the face of adversity, we were ultimately all on the same team.

This teamwork-structured heart in most Americans, along with the definition of the team being "Americans", is likely the real engine that led to the great productivity boom after World War II: a huge lingering heart-based determination and commitment to being Trustworthy. And of course, when Trustworthiness abounds, less regulations are needed. Everything runs smoother, faster, and more accurately. People are less likely to become angry with one another and less likely to stay angry when they do. More gets done, and faster.

In our case of the prosecutors and defense attorneys, both realized that there was a solid ethical line they would not cross, if something was not right. They realized one another's obligation to uphold or test the existing laws, resulting in stronger and more definitive case law after the dust settles. They were less likely to take professional disagreements personally or resort to personal disparagements.

However, as new generations were born and later entered the workplace, this bigger-picture patriotic teamwork emotional structure in the collective American heart faded and fell into disrepair. The inborn need to fight for something appears in every generation, but the definition of the team decayed into factions, and sometimes down to the level of only the self. Infighting and disrespect gradually increased, while Trustworthiness and cohesion decreased. In our courtroom example above, the evening comradery had all but disappeared by the 1980's.

So, will it require another great calamity, economic or military, to bring us together again? Unfortunately, based

on the history of human nature, it is likely, unless a sufficient percent of the population has the correct mindset to prevent it.

This does not mean to run out and start trusting people you don't know, as a means of exemplifying the golden rule. That mindset would be like a self-destructive variant of Stockholm syndrome. Rather, in a respectful way that promotes cooperation (as opposed to disrespect which promotes heel-digging), begin to request detailed proof whenever you feel necessary. Don't settle for assurances and happy talk. Verified facts and numbers are proof. And of course, it is your right to question how they are verified.

If your requests are denied, stand firm and persist respectfully. If your respect is met with disrespect by others, it may be a clue they are hiding something. This is one way of beginning to unveil the truth.

As you can see, respect has a practical use as well as fitting with the desires of most people that we have a more honest and cooperative existence. But it is like any tool that can be used properly or improperly. For example, it is advisable that you have a healthy respect for your enemy's ability. But that doesn't mean it includes the additional step of admiring your enemy's motives.

In the words of one great person: Be as shrewd as snakes, and as innocent as doves. (Substack 7/2/23) (edited 12/6/25)

(1) Footnote 12/6/25: The "major US city" was Birmingham, AL & the lawyer I heard it from was my Dad, Arthur Ernest Parker.

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Respectful Disagreement, Part 2

In part 1, I emphasized that one reason respectful disagreement has all but disappeared, is that it has been decades since any great societal calamity (such as World War II) was intense & long lasting enough to pull us together, in order to put aside our disagreements and fight against a common enemy.

Since the great pull-together years of WWII have faded from our hearts, generations have continued to be born with the instinct to fight against something, and so infighting has greatly increased. I also pointed out that respectful communication has its practical advantages, and that being respectful doesn't mean you have to be a pushover.

Here, part 2 emphasizes that because infighting is increasing, people often feel they cannot not speak their minds without offending someone. This is where I continue a hypothesis of what may have happened: Several groups of people interacted over time, culminating in what we see as a general lack of respectful disagreement in the USA today.

In the US during WWII, regarding day-to-day conversations, there were basically two groups:
The Speak-Out-Regardless group - People who felt the need to speak their opinions, regardless of whether it offended anyone. Their priority was saying what was on their minds.
The Verbal-Conflict-Avoidance group – People who were mortified by the idea of offending someone face to face. They had a strong aversion to any interpersonal arguments. Their priority was getting along with other people.

As you might guess, during WWII, even the Verbal-Conflict-Avoidance group had no fear of speaking their opinions, since most everyone agreed on the war effort to defend the USA and its allies. However, as the decades went by, the definition of "defense" changed from defending the entire USA, to defending various causes, with varying levels of agreement between groups.

This leaves various Verbal-Conflict-Avoidance groups, and various Speak-Out-Regardless groups, scattered through the US, each representing different issues, in different proportions. Naturally, people in these Verbal-Conflict-Avoidance groups began to clam up, except to just a dwindling close and trusted few in their inner circle. This increasingly left those in the Speak-Out-Regardless groups holding the microphone.

Also, many switched from the Speak-Out-Regardless group to the Verbal-Conflict-Avoidance group. This

was because even though many wished to speak out, they found that people such as their supervisors, close friends, or family members, were at various levels of disagreement with their them. So the Verbal-Conflict-Avoidance group came to include many who would have spoken out, but now felt concerned about losing their jobs or ruining family or other relationships. This was not just a feeling. Revenge and retaliation appeared to have increased as a part of the infighting.

Now, I'm not saying that one group or the other always has the moral compass. This may vary, depending on your view.

The increase in media since WWII has led us into a phenomenon where, based on the sheer amount, intensity, and angle of news coverage, it may seem that one of the Speak-Out-Regardless groups has greater strength in numbers than the actual numbers would show.

The tweaking of news is not new in American history. Dueling newspapers and pamphlets were a common occurrence in the 1700's. But reports I've seen indicate that during WWII, all media seemed to come together as one. However, as the years filtered by, with the increasing importance of radio and TV, many supposedly neutral newscasters became increasingly emboldened to use subtle tones and just-under-the-radar word choice, to convey a hint of empathy for one opinion, and an ever-so-slight disdain for the other.

This caused a growing resentment within various Verbal-Conflict-Avoidance groups. Some who were on or near the fence on various issues began to rationalize "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em", or "go along to get along" even if you don't really agree. The size and scope of this resentment should not be underestimated. Thus, the largest Speak-Out-Regardless group might not contain the largest number of people. But because of (1) the nature of their Speak-Out-Regardless communication, coupled with (2) the increasing prevalence of media, many people have come to believe that a certain group's opinion may indeed be the widest held, when in fact it might not be. It is also possible that (3) the Speak-Out-Regardless group and the Verbal-Conflict-Avoidance group might hold different opinions from one another, on top of having different communication styles. Thus, the resentment mentioned above would be magnified to an additional degree, and remain unknown.

Some would look to surveys and polling to get the real truth. However, one of the lesser known open secrets of the polling industry is that the technique mentioned above, where the interviewer employs a few ever-so-subtle word choices to subconsciously nudge a person's heart in one direction, is widely used and varies significantly from poll to poll. So the pollsters who are most artful at this are likely to increase certain numbers based on sly nudging. But even before this happens, recall that certain polls are funded by certain groups, who usually have their own agendas.

Another phenomenon is that since the fearful adversity of WWII has long since disappeared, people's imaginations have gone wild. Their concerns over the decades have traveled from reasonable fears of devastation such as "Will there be an air raid on my town tonight?" to fears that their existing wardrobe will become less than impressive next year. So, fears of devastating consequences have increasingly been replaced with fears of non-devastating consequences, mistakenly perceived as devastating. It's the old human nature truth that we are born to fight for something, and to fight against something else, and if there's nothing big to create a war in our minds about, we will drill down until we find it.

As a result of all this, we have the extreme and possibly overblown confidence of the Speak-Out-Regardless groups, and the extreme and simmering resentment of the Verbal-Conflict-Avoidance groups, on not one, but a range of issues. Therefore, emotions are running high in all groups, trip-wire anger sits like a minefield on what's left of our social fabric, and the possibility of respectful disagreement has mostly been lost at this time.

Additionally, it is possible that if another great calamity should befall us, we might already be so fractured and splintered in our opinions that no cohesion would emerge, in order to band together and fight against such a societal cataclysm. In the mean-time, those who can see what is happening here can continue to set brave examples by speaking out respectfully, not only freeing themselves of the burden of their stifled opinions, but also showing others that it can be done, respectfully. But in the process, what armor could we wear that would repel the slings and arrows of outrageous return-fire rhetoric? Most reliably, we must base our sense of self-worth on something that does not change. And in our hearts we know what that is. (7/18/23) (Substack 7/18/23)

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Spinach
I would hope that a friend would tell me if I had spinach on my teeth, but more importantly I would hope a friend would tell me if I said or did something that should have embarrassed me. (8/6/23)

Swine
Often times, one of the short-sighted thoughts we have is that "Others think kind of like I do, so they should understand what I say." Do not continue to believe that you can be liked by everyone. There are people who exist and flourish in the same environment with you, who can be friendly and respectful, but might never understand or like you, no matter what you say or do. Hence the lesson "Do not throw your pearls before swine". It is however, worth it to try to communicate with them to some degree, but when a concrete wall appears, pivot. (10/6/23) (Substack 10/6/23)

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Nightmare on Main Street

Thankfully not as bad as Freddie Krueger, the Dunning-Kruger Effect, however, continues to be a source of many palm-to-the-head lamentations, especially in the world of conversation.

The Dunning-Kruger Effect occurs when a person overestimates his own knowledge or ability regarding a particular subject, such as with humor, logical reasoning, grammar, and others (1). It's not a mental disorder, but it is a faulty way of thinking that many of us fall into from time to time.

It is better not to be overestimated – not only by others, but also by the self, in order to avoid slipping into Dunning-Kruger, which is a form of prejudice that works against the self. Overestimating the self can be just as harmful if not more, than underestimating the self. Overestimating the self often leads to high hopes & unrealistically high expectations that may later become dashed upon the rocks.

Obviously, Dunning-Kruger has dire consequences for anyone taking a test. But many of us also overestimate our knowledge or ability, and then go out and operate heavy machinery and make important decisions. (Yes, the Benadryl rule applies here as well.)

Within the art of conversation though, the practice of self-overestimating means a decline in truth. Disproportion and misinformation ensue, and it might well dissolve into a blathering contest if both participants happen to be afflicted with this psychological misfortune.

If you think your conversational partner might be a Dunning-Kruger sufferer, be careful that you don't unwittingly become one yourself. Seriously considering someone's opposing opinion is one way to stop it, since the nature of DK tells you that you probably don't need their opinion anyway.

Even if your opinion is eventually shown to be the correct one, the mere fact that you had considered someone's opposing opinion is a sign that you're probably not overestimating yourself.

"Considering someone's opposing opinion" is defined in the mind of the beholder. There's no mathematical standard to rate how well you considered their opinion. But your degree of honest effort and genuineness gets communicated to them as you interact, and it makes all the difference. (1/26/24)

https://www.britannica.com/science/Dunning-Kruger-effect

(Substack 2/6/24)

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Why Can't We Talk?

It's easy to find someone on the news going on about how divided Americans are today. Of course, respectful discussion is better than heated discussion. But I fear that the lack of any discussion at all may be the worst of the three, because then no info is exchanged, and misunderstanding only accumulates and festers.

I'm an optimist when it comes to finding common ground and having respectful discussion, because most people do actually agree on the over-arching basic humanitarian goals, although they may disagree on how to get there. And these widely agreed upon goals are the best place to start.

Here are but a few of the conversational tips I've picked up, that can keep the common ground high and dry enough to walk across:

Agree to speak politely, no matter what.
Don't get your hopes and your observations mixed up.
Avoid slipping into a self-righteous attitude, which will destroy the conversation immediately.
Speak from this mindset: You are interested in someone's opposing opinion and would like to help them understand your opinion, but you are also open to changing your mind if they present some good evidence. You need to ooze all 3 of these. Do not be afraid to look at what you believe is the dark side of the coin.
Agree on some broad common goals within a subject, for example "increased freedom in society" or "fair taxation."
Discuss the evidence of what has historically succeeded & failed.
Use these principles when discussing the evidence: Numbers are easier to verify than opinion. Physical evidence such as writings, audio/video, and corporate or government records are superior to opinion alone. Results of numerous studies that have been replicated by different researchers over a long time, are better than one or two studies. A number of witnesses is better than one witness. Avoid hard & fast assumptions. Assumptions are squishy by nature. Motives are not evidence but they can be used to guess a more likely outcome.
Talk about improvements on old ideas.
Talk about totally new ideas.

If your conversational partner flies off the handle and becomes angry, he will likely later realize you were making a great effort to be respectful. This will at least show him that the people on the other side of the opinion are not all a bunch of authoritarians. And it may be this seed, sown into common ground, that eventually grows into an agreement. (1/26/24) (Substack 1/28/24)

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The Unsaid

While some things are better left unsaid, most things are better left said, respectfully. I would rather err on the side of respectfully saying too much, than not enough.

Respectful conversation can build bridges, while silence simply leaves two people staring at one another across the canyon, with each one assuming who knows what.

Assumption leads to poor decision-making, and the long row of dominoes keeps falling.

Silence is not the only way things are left unsaid. A stream of small talk can be continued, keeping you floating

on the superficial surface, without diving down deep to uncover and possibly solve the simmering issues.

Honest and open conversations on the deep subjects are like gold.

These conversations can be had, if no one gets offended. So two questions arise:

How do I keep from being offended in the face of any flame-thrower rhetoric?

It requires a secure person, so it depends on where you get your sense of worth. You might be different, but I have to unplug my sense of worth from this world, which is changeable shaky ground, and plug it into something unchangeable, which is my spiritual higher power.

Also, remember that calm in the face of verbal onslaught can be mistaken for weakness, but it actually provides a lubrication to your mental machinery that allows you to zip around the obstacles effectively, without getting bogged down in any of them.

How do I keep myself from being perceived as offensive?

I've written about this more in depth in an article entitled "Why Can't We Talk?" but there are two standout answers:

Speak from this mindset: (1) You are interested in someone's opposing opinion and (2) would like to help them understand your opinion, but (3) you are also open to changing your mind if they present some good evidence. You need to ooze all 3 of these attitudes.

Use these principles when discussing the evidence:

1. Numbers are easier to verify than opinion.
2. Physical evidence such as writings, audio/video, and corporate or government records are superior to opinion alone.
3. Numerous studies replicated by different researchers over a long time, are better than one or two studies.
4. A number of occurrences add up to a trend. In the bigger picture, "anecdotal evidence" is often an oxymoron.
5. Avoid hard & fast assumptions. Assumptions are squishy by nature.
6. Motives are not evidence but they can be used to guess a more likely outcome.

Even if your conversational partner becomes angry at your respectful efforts, at least you have planted the seed of respect in his mind, which may grow into a better conversation later.

We might agree that honesty and candor are two of the top virtues. But can we handle them coming from other people? Would we rather hear something offensive and quickly see it as a form of constructive criticism, and see it as a place to calmly start our case for the defense? If not, go back to where you get your sense of worth. The key is there.

(4/28/24) (Substack 4/28/24)

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Rule #1

In conversation, rule number one is to remember to the depths of your soul, that people are more sensitive than you think. 4/18/24

It's Worth It
Go ahead & spend the time & energy to utter the extra syllables that prevent millions of misunderstandings. 5/18/24

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When Small Talk Is Silence

The Popular Proliferation of Clamming Up Under the Guise of Pleasantry

“Hanging on in quiet desperation is the English way.” - Pink Floyd

Silence is golden, but overall maybe 14 karat. And it might be golden now, then turn into something else later. “Speaking respectfully on the deep issues” is the 24 karat gold.

Small talk has its appropriate time and place, but it’s often overused as a cover on a boiling pot of deeper issues.

Here’s a short little drama episode to illustrate:
I recall years ago, a co-worker who was usually very friendly, suddenly became a bit aloof, as if an October breeze had brought down the temperature of the usual small talk by a few degrees. Soon after, the verbal jacket-weather spread to a couple of other people, who interestingly were in that same person’s small clique. But the small talk did continue on.

Did I offend someone? I kept reviewing the mental audio/videos of interactions over and over again, hoping to see what I did wrong or how I could have been misinterpreted. The mental replays revealed nothing. I began to suspect there was a power player in the shadows, who may have invented something disparaging.

Eventually a former co-worker did tell me what happened. It turned out my suspicions of a drama-fabricator were correct. I had already moved on to another workplace by then, but she couldn’t tell me while I was still employed there, fearing I might over-react & somehow drag her into a controversy. I would not have over-reacted, but she didn’t know that, based on the usual social standard of “considerable disagreement followed by considerable unrest.”

I don’t follow that standard and should probably wear a name tag that says “Go ahead and say what’s really on your mind, because you have finally met someone who will not fly off the handle.”

Now, I’m no stellar conversationalist - far from it. But after working with a lot of highly emotional clients over the years, I finally became able to listen to a barrage of objectionable rhetoric without it causing any internal boil-over.

I have a desire to painstakingly figure out ways of freely saying or asking what many would leave unsaid. Ironically, it’s usually the more important things that are left unsaid, while small talk prevails like 3 inches of icing on a half-inch cake.

“Much unhappiness has come into the world because of bewilderment and things left unsaid.”
- Fyodor Dostoevsky

Free speech correlates negatively with the number of short-fuse personalities in the general population. Sadly, people’s sense of Self-Worth is increasingly tied into the words they hear, which fail to be perfect at some

point. Not surprisingly, the number of short-fusers has increased.

Over the years, my Higher Power has helped me mostly disconnect Self-Worth from the words I hear. Not only is this a stress reduction, but it's allowed me to amiably take part in the two main taboo conversation types: religion and politics. Respectful conversation builds new bridges, and allows people to hear things they might not have gotten to hear inside their usual sphere.

With politics for example, sometimes I live vicariously by listening to an opinion host argue against those I disagree with. Opinion hosts can be sources of information, but some of them are bridge detonators based on their flammable verbal techniques alone.

Unfortunately, many listeners don't separate their useful info from their incendiary technique. So in day-to-day, person-to-person conversations, they think "Oh no, we can't talk about that. It will get ugly. Some small talk will be okay." And often it is okay, but it's like anything else a human being does: it can be overdone, underdone, or done right. Often, there comes a point at which a great wall of misunderstanding gets built simply from not clearing away the refuse of the refusal to have a deep talk.

It's sickening to sense the level of misunderstanding, misinterpretation, prejudice, overgeneralization, and impulsive assumption-making that prevents the deeper conversations that could have been had.

One particularly foul thing is being misunderstood without being given a chance to explain or ask questions. "Explaining" is an unpopular concept nowadays, along with the popular belief that "If you're explaining, you're losing." I don't agree with that. Everyone should get a chance to explain and ask hard questions. It's what our court system was originally based on, imperfect as it may be, and it's the best way forward in communication.

Reverting to small talk may be good when there's a couple of oppositional-defiant short-fusers hanging around, but when there's someone in the conversation who is committed to being respectful throughout, there will likely be no hot argument, because it takes two to tango.

When people discuss something they already agree on, it's like driving over an existing bridge. But there's a lot more work and a lot more reward in building a new bridge.

Unfortunately however, the Self-Worth of some short-fusers is so bound up in words, they become Rabid. A Rabid short-fuser cannot handle even a neutral conversational partner. This throws a chill on those of us who are able to discuss religion and politics politely, as we default back to the small talk.

So, increasingly there is this fearful respect of the Rabid, while fearless respect based on morals, has dwindled down to almost nothing. People assume everyone they disagree with is Rabid, when it's not really the case.

When it comes to the things that are aching to be said, small talk is essentially silence. And as Jordan Peterson once said, "When you have something to say, silence is a lie."

Words are only as good as the action that backs them up. They float off into the atmosphere, unlike sticks and stones, and unlike physically staying to listen to someone's tirade while you're trying to build a bridge. Staying to listen doesn't mean you have to budge on your opinion. In fact it shows the tirader that there is a way to "disagree agreeably", a phrase more often spoken than practiced.

My hope is that many people will disconnect their Self-Worth from words, and use their newly found thick skin to move from the mind-numbing over-proliferation of default small talk, into the world of constructive firm bridge building.

If you wish to keep your first amendment, you should be able to handle it respectfully as served to you by

others, rare or well-done, and anywhere in between.

3/17/25 (Substack **3-30-25**)

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Disappearing Speech

Ethically, protests and conversations should not include verbal personal attacks. Of course, some levels of verbal personal attacks are allowed by the 1st amendment. And while these attacks are not productive, the bigger picture reveals that having a "speech police" ends up restricting what anyone and everyone "feels" is a personal attack, which could be anything.

For some people, an offender is the first one to say or do something mentally hurtful. To others, an offender is the first one to do something physically hurtful.

So, it depends on whether you trust the speech police to decide what is fair for you. Keep in mind that history is full of examples where the speech police went way overboard, then free speech disappeared. If you are in favor of criminalizing "hate speech", remember that any speech police will be controlled by a human. And based on human nature, your free speech might just disappear. 5-16-24

Huh?
If a bunch of things happen at the same time, causing some mild panic, and then it all stops, you might have the occasion to say, "Did we learn something from this commotion?"
1-5-25

Watch
Be on the lookout for any subterranean motives.
1-6-25

Best Technique
One of the most underrated and underused communication techniques is to simply say "Example please" when someone is making a point using generalities, and you think he may not have the details to back up his point.
1-15-25

Both of Those
If someone keeps indicating that you might not understand them, you might eventually have to say with a smile, "No illusion, no confusion."
1-18-25

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Socially Clumsy

Some of us are better at the written word than the spoken word. You might say we're "backspace-dependent" or "delete key" dependent. Some of you may be like this, but most of you probably know someone who is.

Like most everything else a human does, there are all degrees of social clumsiness. I rate myself a 3 out of 10 on the scale of verbal virtuosity. No "silver tongue award" forthcoming here.

Social clumsiness is one symptom of autism. Autism occurs on a scale, where an otherwise normally functioning person might have a slight touch of autism (1). Not sure if that's me, but Elon Musk has publicly admitted to having Asperger's syndrome, which is a form of Autism Spectrum Disorder. (Wish I had his "Ability To Do High Level Math" disorder, but oh well.)

Also, social clumsiness seems to go in cycles, like many other things in life. With some relationships, there's little or no social clumsiness at all. And if the topic is something I'm well versed in, like health care, I can swim in it fairly well. But small talk, including humor, is definitely not my forte. I love funny stuff but if you look up "cornball" in the dictionary, my picture is there.

It seems like when I'm especially worried about being up to par, thoughts start running into each other and cancelling each other out, meanwhile letting an unsupervised one escape out of the mouth. Fortunately it doesn't happen often, but just enough that the introspection here helps organize my thoughts and might help someone else along the way.

Settings where I'm especially trying not to be socially clumsy, is where it happens. We've all seen this portrayed on TV. You screw up from trying too hard not to screw up. Most people outgrow this by their 20's, and I did somewhat, but never caught up with those who have learned to turn the social arena into their own art gallery.

When verbally interacting with someone, I sometimes get a glimpse inside their social art gallery. The works in there are quite impressive and beautiful, like Rembrandts or Rockwells. I marvel and admire them, knowing that my time in their gallery will be limited as I have no real works of verbal art to trade with them (except maybe some Picassos which I have never liked). But this is no pity party.

We all tend to move toward relationships with like-minded people in various arenas. In the spoken word arena, there are people with whom I have avoided having conversations. So, it's relative. But it makes me feel for those who might rate themselves a 1 or 2 out of 10, so I try to be as polite as possible.

Being polite brings up a related subject. I really don't want to break with decorum and say the wrong thing while visiting someone's amazing verbal gallery, but as noted above, this is precisely the time I might commit first degree Faux Pas.

At first, my conversational partner may politely overlook an eccentricity, but after a series of foibles on different occasions, I have sometimes come to be seen as a careless disrupter of the feng shui.

This has to do with whether the verbal artist sees my words as careless or clueless. Well, I'm thoroughly clueless, like I'm playing chess against a professional. And when someone is clueless, the true friendly thing to do is respectfully clue them in. You find out who your best friends are when they tell you the hard stuff.

Don't let your clumsy friend just languish in the social darkness, while he's wondering what he said or did that might have been off-putting. For him, that's like trying to learn a new language with absolutely no feedback. Lacking any constructive criticism, he will remain clueless.

Thankfully my wife has clued me in from time to time over the years. But friends hesitate to do so, wrongfully assuming it might ruffle the feathers. On the contrary, I greatly appreciate the age-old wisdom:

"Do not correct a scoffer, lest he hate you;
Rebuke a wise man, and he will love you."

Many of us less-than-stellar conversationalists might be labeled as scoffers, and indeed some are. But many are not, and so we crave this constructive criticism. I recall one rare golden moment with a friend who mentioned that even one of the biblical authors had a situation similar to mine, being better at the written word than the spoken. The verse goes:

"For his letters," they say, "are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible."

And it continues:
"…what we are in word by letters when we are absent, such we will also be in deed when we are present", meaning that while the speech may fail, the mindset in the letters, and the deeds that come from this mindset, are still present.

Most people understand there are limits to the human body, and we are all endowed with different physical strengths and talents. We can work on those talents and improve them. Still, most people don't think of verbal ability as a part of the body, but it is: Verbal ability takes place in brain cells and the connections between them.

But even if we realize this, there is still the popular fallacy that everyone's brain begins life with the same blank slate. It does not. Further, this is not an either-or situation, where a person either has a normal brain or they do not. Instead, each brain-based ability or talent that we have, including verbal ability, occurs on a spectrum of possibilities, and does not fit in one box or the other.

If you study hard in math class your scores will improve, but some people will reach their different ceilings no matter how much time they put in. The same is true with verbal ability.

You may find yourself in conversation with a person or group who expects you to verbally perform at their high level, or at least be able to show some quick progress. For some of us, these levels of performance are like the verbal radio communication between the Blue Angels pilots, with the general tones & words perceptible to any listener, while only the pilots perceive those subtle verbal cues and clues embedded in the commander's voice (2).

At other times you might see yourself as a comet that occasionally passes by and manages to get a good look at all the organized planets in their near perfect orbits circling the sun.

The good news is that whatever our imperfections, we can accept them and move on, finding things to be thankful for, because there's many more than just one type of gallery.

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2-2-25 (Substack **2-3-25**) (edited slightly 12/7/25)

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Greetings from the Past

For some reason the other day I had what seemed like a vague memory of my Dad's Dad using the greeting "How ya feeling?" However, I do recall specifically there was a patient in a nursing home back in the early 1990's who would always greet people the same way. I would not be surprised if this greeting was a residual effect of World War 2, where the vast majority of Americans felt united to a degree that had not occurred in a long time. 2-18-25

Greater Detail

I have a lifelong pattern of asking more questions than most people, which causes some people to assume I'm pushing an idea, when I'm really just pursuing greater detail to arrive at a greater understanding with them. And sometimes when I lay out ideas on the table for others to consider, they may assume I'm pushing an idea there, when I'm just explaining my idea in greater detail. So whether asking or explaining, people often assume the "greater detail" means I'm being unnecessarily nosey or pushing something.

Sometimes it's possibly error on my part, being a bit socially clumsy at times. But I wonder if some who misunderstand me might be lacking the internal security it takes when it comes to exploring greater detail.

Exploring greater detail is like going off the trail into a dense forest, admitting you might not recognize something or might not know exactly where you're going, but you're willing to learn.

This seems to happen more often when people are at work. Some attach their self-worth to their performance in this (physical) world, more so than others. If you ask them or give them what they think is too much detail, they might simply say, "You're overthinking it."

Those who are generally unwilling to explore great detail may tend to think that other people are not dealing with much detail themselves. If someone asks me something I don't know, I just say "I don't know, but I'd be happy to find out or point you in the right direction, whichever you prefer." If the person thinks the answer should be simple, they may say "You're the employee, you're supposed to know". My reply is "There are more details and gray areas here than you might think, so I can move toward getting us a clearer answer if you wish." 3/18/25

Talking Politics

Often this gets heated because voters come to hate certain people. My idea about this is: "People don't turn into law; policies turn into law. So let's talk policies." Avoid even saying republican or democrat. 3/19/25

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Don't Believe Everything You Read

The book "Brain Rules for Baby" (1) is generally a useful and informative book, but I disagree with the way he explores autism. The author indicates that babies need face-to-face time in order to continue adding to their library of facial cues, in order to assess what is being communicated to them. Great, but at the same time he paints a dim picture of children with autism (p.116), with no helpful suggestions. He might should have added

that some signs of autism may be identified as early as 12 months, and parents should be alert to these signs so a professional can intervene as early as possible.

On p.117, the author says "Your autistic child may never have the warmth of a pastor". He should have said something about how people communicate "warmth" in different ways.

On p. 150 he explains that learning non-verbal communication is important for kids, and typed phone messaging shuts out this learning. The paragraph then concludes with "That's the world autistic kids live in, by the way." He then goes on to advocate limiting phone time so kids can learn the non-verbal cues, without any advice for the autistic child who it looks like he believes just stuck in a cue-less world.

On p. 176, he says "Autistic children, for example, have no ability to detect changes in people's emotional states", and "Even outside this extreme, empathy is uneven. You probably know people who are naturally highly empathetic and others with the emotional understanding of dirt." Needless to say, I would not have framed it in this disparaging way.

Reference:

1. Medina, John: Brain Rules for Baby (2014, 2nd Edition) ISBN-13 #978-1-7323803-3-2

(5/27/25)

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The Math
Since people today in the US no longer understand the math, the incentive must be explained to them. (6/26/25)

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Are You Often Misunderstood?

You might have Broader Autism Phenotype and not know it.

"Don't get me wrong" is a common phrase indicating that what I'm saying or doing might be misinterpreted. Misinterpretation happens, but who is at fault, the speaker/doer or the listener/observer? Most of us might say sometimes one, sometimes the other.

However, some adults are often unaware they send out mixed social signals, as well as being unaware of some of the more nuanced social signals from others, making them ripe for misinterpretation.

This is a common feature of people with **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)**, noted to occur in 0.01% of the population in the 1970's, and 2.8% in 2024 (a 27,900% increase).

You might say "I've seen autistic people. It's pretty obvious they don't know how they're coming across. You can't blame them." But keep in mind, it's a spectrum. Some people have only a touch of it.

What Is BAP?

You may have known someone with **Broader Autism Phenotype (BAP)**, but didn't realize it. People with BAP are not autistic, but share subclinical degrees of some autistic-like communication traits, such as mild social communication difficulties (word choice, not enunciation), social rigidity, or aloofness.

In other words, they are more often a bit socially clumsy at intervals. These traits, while not meeting diagnostic criteria for ASD, can influence social interactions in ways that may cause misinterpretations.

People with BAP communicate normally much of the time, but in some situations may seem oddly out of touch with the finer points of verbal and non-verbal communication. They may occasionally do or say something a bit odd & get the side-eye from other conversational participants. They are often unaware of their faux-pax & will likely never be told about it since others consider them "normal enough, just odd at times, not enough of a problem to say anything that might stir up any friction."

What others don't realize is, people with BAP would love some respectful feedback. It would be like borrowing a friend's hearing aid after years of catching only 80% of all conversations.

Ironically, people with BAP have one disadvantage that autistic people do not – they don't get the "benefit of the doubt" on social blunders since they don't appear to have any kind of real clinical disorder.

Testing For BAP

Broader Autism Phenotype (BAP) is slight enough to be just outside the Autism Spectrum, so there is no official diagnosis for BAP at this time. But there are self-tests for it, such as:

Broad Autism Phenotype Questionnaire (BAPQ)
Autism Spectrum Quotient (AQ)
Social Responsiveness Scale (SRS-2) – Adult Self-Report Version
Ritvo Autism Asperger Diagnostic Scale-Revised (RAADS-R)
Subthreshold Autism Trait Questionnaire (SATQ)
Systemizing Quotient-Revised (SQ-R)

Clinical interviews and observations by professionals can also pinpoint it.

Misunderstood

Remember the children's game of "broken telephone"? This is where a chain of people sit in a circle or chain, and a short verbal story is whispered from one person to the next until it completes the circle. The last person to hear the story then shares with the group what they heard, and it's usually entertainingly different than what the first person said.

One study (1) used this technique and found that autistic individuals' directness, atypical nonverbal cues, or focus on detail can be misread as disinterest, rudeness, or lack of empathy. In the study there were three groups: (A) chains of **all** autistic participants, (B) chains of **all** non-autistic participants, and (C) **mixed** chains of both.

The study found that the autistic people in group A communicated the facts of the story just as effectively as the non-autistic people in group B. Group C was the least efficient because communication styles were mixed.

Another study (2), found that non-autistic observers frequently misjudge autistic social behaviors, leading to biased perceptions, and that "style, not substance, drives negative impressions of ASD."

While these studies concern people actually diagnosed with autism, people with BAP share some of the same communication difficulties, such as challenges with pragmatic language (the social use of language), social reciprocity, or emotional recognition, only to a milder degree. However, being misinterpreted more often than average does not feel mild at all, to the person with BAP.

A 2016 article (3) highlights that BAP individuals may struggle with maintaining fluid conversations or interpreting social cues, which can differ from typical social norms. **Neurotypical individuals (average people)** might misinterpret the BAP person's reserved or literal (as opposed to figurative) communication styles as disinterest, aloofness, or even rudeness.

A 2025 study (4) found that the communication challenges in people with BAP can be misinterpreted by those who expect more typical social engagement.

A 2023 article (5) notes that BAP communication traits can be mistaken for other conditions or overlooked due to masking, where people with BAP try to suppress their usual conversational tendencies in order to fit in. This masking can lead to misunderstandings, as others may not recognize the effort BAP individuals put into navigating social situations, potentially perceiving them as socially awkward or inconsistent. Subtler cues are often missed by people with BAP, leading to misinterpretations of their social behavior as shyness or quirkiness rather than BAP-related communication traits.

A 2017 study (6) indicates that BAP individuals may sometimes struggle to infer others' subtle intentions or emotions, potentially leading to social missteps that neurotypical individuals might misinterpret as lack of empathy or social disengagement. Conversely, the average person may not appreciate the cognitive effort BAP individuals exert to navigate social situations, leading to a perception gap.

The lack of a formal diagnostic status for BAP also means it's often underrecognized, which could amplify social misinterpretations (7).

The traits associated with BAP—such as social aloofness, literal communication, or discomfort with change—can clash with neurotypical expectations of social fluidity, emotional expressiveness, or adaptability. For example, a BAP individual's tendency to focus on details or avoid small talk might be misread as disinterest or arrogance. Similarly, their challenges with pragmatic language (the unwritten rules of usual communication) could lead to conversations that feel stilted or off-topic to others. These differences, while subclinical, can lead to a disconnect in social settings where neurotypical norms dominate.

So, while quite often the person with BAP feels he or she has been convicted of being odd in the court of social opinion, he or she should strive to remember, and neurotypical people should also strive to remember, that our true worth is based in the spiritual world.

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(7/12/25)

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Empathy vs. Caring

Much has been made of autistic people lacking empathy. My test scores on the BAPQ and the AQ tests lean towards BAP (Broad Autism Phenotype). This means I'm not autistic, but I have a slight version of the social clumsiness that autistic people have. From introspection, I can tell you there is a difference between empathizing and caring.

There's a lot of literature on empathy, written in such a way that it assumes caring is inseparable from empathy. Au contraire. There have been countless times where I didn't really "feel" what someone was going through, but I had an extremely strong desire to help them in their anguish or pain.

As well, working in health care, I have seen many people talk about their feelings of what others are going through, only to see these same talkers do some uncaring things. How can that be?

Something called "rationalization" enters the picture, where feelings lead reason around on a leash. Some people are great at this "fooling the self". It seems to be a substitution of feelings for facts. Just in my opinion, those that are prone to operate more on feeling (rather than a balanced mix of feeling and reason), may be more prone to empathize, but also more prone to rationalize.

One mistake researchers make is classifying people with high emotionality as more "emotionally intelligent". I think emotional intelligence should be defined as the ability to use emotion in a constructive way that helps others. There are plenty of "high emotionality" people out there who do very little to help others, and in my view are not emotionally intelligent.

(7/21/25)

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Info On the Table – Let's Eat

Have you ever had a conversation where you simply Placed a piece of information on the "conversational table" for someone to look at, only to be perceived as Pushing that piece of information at them?

You were the Placer but were perceived as the Pusher. What was your word choice, tone of voice, and body language like? Why did the listener misperceive you?

Whose perception was correct with regard to culturally acceptable standards, the Speaker or the Listener? Recording the conversation and playing it back to a diverse focus group might give you an answer, but who has a totally objective focus group?

Psychological frameworks such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), the Big Five personality traits, and Cluster B Personality Disorders indicate there are indeed personality types that are more likely to mistakenly perceive people as pushy, while others are more likely to be pushy but not recognize it in themselves.

All of that gets pretty deep in the weeds (where I usually play golf), so I'll stick to what we can do to improve the situation.

Entrée 1: Bend over backwards to have a calm tone of voice.

Assume the listener is extremely sensitive, so use the most polite word choices possible. And try not to grit your teeth in the process.

Entrée 2: Read up in advance on non-aggressive body language.

And here are some questions for pondering and cogitation (side dishes):

If a Placer often makes a second effort to explain his/her position by politely reframing it, is the reframing often perceived as a Pushy repetition?

Are some people more literal in their communication while others often mistakenly perceive them as having ulterior motives? People with autism as well as those with Broader Autism Phenotype are more likely to speak in literal terms, sometimes being misperceived as figurative, causing a misunderstanding.

Are some some personality types too sensitive, too ready to assume they are being attacked by what they mistakenly believe are information pushers or ulterior motive deceivers?

Do some personalities value the sensitivity of relationships over the truthfulness of critical must-know information?

Some info is just not critical enough to risk an argument. But when it comes to critical information, I'd rather put a little too much info on the table than regret putting too little. Then you can say, "I did all I could." Just be ultra polite in the process. (7-31-25)

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Pleasantries Overdone

To maintain a totally pleasant social environment in your life across all encounters, small talk has to totally dominate. I'm not comfortable with that totality because I think it stagnates progress among people. The founding of the US would never have occurred.

Of course, balance is key. We must be as polite as possible and not argue much about small concerns, in order to keep the lines open. But shutting the lines down for fear of getting a reply you don't like, is a sad situation that also leads to various power-seekers ever-so-gradually, and under-the-radar gaining control. It keeps a greater number of like-minded people from coalescing into something that cannot be ignored.

In certain situations, I might even trust the words of someone I disagree with, but who I trust will tell me what's really on his/her mind, over someone who never expresses any controversial opinions.

(Substack **7/26/25**) (minor edit 12/7/25)

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Argument Stoppers

Be careful in your desire to discuss controversial subjects that you do it with an openness to opposing info, and not get caught up in winning alone.

When someone continues to argue from emotion & generality, and your efforts to build a bridge (so that you both may venture into the land of detailed facts and reason) are met with refusal, you might find the occasion to say, "**I'd be happy to look at the evidence for that if you'll send it**." Then smile. This is especially useful in discussing politics, where many documented facts are often ignored or just unknown by one or both of the conversational participants. The validity as well as the relative importance of these facts needs to be discussed.

If you are in a situation where someone's trying to make you the bad guy in front of other people, you could also use the above statement. But if for some reason sending evidence is not an option, you might say "**Well, my opinion's different but I'll tell you about it later if you want**."

8/15/25

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Not-So-Polite Society

I've written about this before, but this time I bring along a few other folks you may have heard of, just to spice it up.

Of course, there are times we cannot talk politics. We bite our tongues at work to keep the peace and keep our jobs.

But there are times when we might could gently venture into a respectful political discussion. Keyword – respectful. Respectful exchange of ideas, especially ideas we disagree on, are the bolts & welds that build stronger bridges and resolve conflicts.

But in the US, many have defaulted to small talk and pleasantries for fear of being offensive. While appropriate in some situations, I think overall this fear has become too widespread and pervasive, which has the ultimate effect of unbuilt bridges and unresolved conflicts. In other words, a short-term gain with a long-term loss.

Others have written about this. AI tells me:

"John Stuart Mill, in 'On Liberty' (1859), argued that open discussion of controversial ideas is essential for truth and societal progress. He criticized the 'tyranny of the majority,' where social pressures suppress unpopular opinions, preventing critical issues from being addressed. He emphasized that even false ideas should be debated to refine and strengthen truth."

"George Orwell, particularly in essays like 'The Prevention of Literature' (1946), warned about the chilling effect of social conformity on free expression. He noted that polite society's fear of offending or disrupting norms often leads to self-censorship, hindering honest discourse on pressing issues."

"Jonathan Haidt, in 'The Coddling of the American Mind' (2018, co-authored with Greg Lukianoff), explores how modern society's emphasis on emotional safety and avoiding discomfort has led to a culture where controversial topics are dodged, especially in academic and public spheres. This creates 'safetyism', where unresolved issues fester due to fear of offense."

"Jordan Peterson frequently discusses how polite society often stifles debate on contentious issues like identity, gender, and cultural values. In '12 Rules for Life' (2018) and public talks, he argues that avoiding discomfort prevents the resolution of complex societal problems."

Giving your controversial opinion might require a little rejection of fear and addition of courage:

“Our lives begin to end, the day we become silent about things that matter.” (Martin Luther King, Jr.)

“If you disagree with me, come to the front of the line.” (Charlie Kirk)

Maybe, from time to time we might can muster up just 1% of the courage these guys had.

(Substack 9/10/25)
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A&B
You might one day find the occasion to say, "You may be buying into what person A said about person B, instead of what person B said directly, or more importantly, what person B did for a fact." 9/21/25

Mind-Reading
Thinking back long ago, I recall someone who was often a blamer. Interestingly, when I would confront this blame with a fact that effectively sunk the blame immediately, she would lapse into a weak plan B that involved me not anticipating her needs perfectly. When it got to that point, I guess I could have replied, "I'm sorry I was not…….clairvoyant." (12/17/25)

The Point
If you’re making a good point, sometimes people will try to pull you off track by making an assumption about your point, throwing something unexpected at you, so you will additionally now have to explain why their assumption is not valid.

Being male, I can use this example: Person A might say that jails contain 86% male and 14% female inmates because males simply commit more crime. Person B might suddenly interject “No, males are 50% of the population, so the system must be unfairly prejudiced against males.”

So now, in addition to the stats showing males commit more crime, Person A would also need to have proof that the system is not prejudiced against males. This proof might well exist, or it may be debatable, or it might not exist at all. Such proof would consist of more detailed information, such as types of evidence and behavior documented more often in cases of male crime, number of complaints filed on males vs. females, etc.

Having thought ahead, Person A might well have this info already. But if not, he might do well to simply reply, “The point is, it’s not about genitalia. It’s about behavior.” (1.3.26)

Explanation For Silence
If you feel you cannot say anything without setting off a communication firestorm directed your way, and someone asks “Why are you being so quiet?” you might find the occasion to reply, “Just keepin’ the peace” or alternatively, “Butterflies, confetti, happy dogs and happy children.” (1.4.26)

How Long
A free country can last only as long as the average citizen is not a short-fuser. 2/2/26

The Two Meanings of “Believe”
Abraham Lincoln once said, “I shall try to correct errors when shown to be errors; and I shall adopt new views so fast as they shall appear to be true views.”

It's one thing for person A to say "I believe I'm right" about something, and leave open the possibility he might be wrong. It's another thing for person B to say "I believe I'm right" and ignore any evidence to the contrary.

Unfortunately even though my view is the same as person A, people sometimes respond to me like I'm person B. Then I have to explain that I'm simply putting a view on the table for consideration, not insisting that I'm 100% right. In addition, I'm open to any hear evidence to the contrary. (2/11/26)

Tired Of It

I'm tired of watching this trend where increasingly on TV, people are being rewarded for being long-winded interrupters.

Also, many have developed a deceptive word-smithing talent that in a nutshell, substitutes emotion, generalities and half-truths for verifiable facts, math, and whole truths. This talent can mesmerize the *susceptible*, who are focused on the energy of the speaker, mistaking enthusiasm or intense emotion for truth.

The *unsusceptible,* or unhypnotizable, seem to have a conversational x-ray vision stemming from an innate desire for clarity, and will insist on the verifiable and the verified, much to the chagrin of these Oscar-level deceivers. And oh how these deceivers will yell and interrupt when they are found out.

We see politicians who, when they are asked a detailed question about how something *will* be done, often flip into how something *should* be done and that it *needs* to be done, effectively avoiding the fact that they really don't know or don't want to say how it *will* be done. And when asked for evidence, they launch into statements so general that they do not *qualify* as evidence, such as saying "Well, the evidence is that this person lies" without giving an example of how this person's lies were verified to be actual lies.
(3-27-26)

End of chapter - Communication

Death

(This section might seem kind of depressing depending on how you look at it, but it is intended to provide some positive insights into something that will eventually and most definitely occur, whereupon we might could use some positive insights.)

Physical vs Spiritual
The more I see people who pass away, whose last sight was probably the ceiling in a nursing home or hospital, the more I realize it's not about your surroundings as much as it is about God being in your heart at the time, and the relief that follows.

Hospice
I'd rather live sooner in Heaven, than longer in pain.

That Point
While I'm here, I'll work to help others however I can. But one of my advance directives is this: If I ever get to where I can't feed myself, feed me the pain medicine, because at that point I may not be able to fully communicate any pain or anguish I may be in.

I'll Fly Away
Some say "Life's a bitch and then you die." I prefer to say, "Life's a glitch and then you fly."

CPR
Having worked for hospice, it occurs to me that sometimes, CPR is for the family, and not the patient.

Anticipation
Toward the end of physical life, the deep inhale for the potential of things, is gradually lost. It is replaced by the deep inhale before the transition to the spiritual life.

A Glimpse
Lately I have been focusing more on surrender of everything to God.
Today, I was listening to a favorite tune, "Seasons" by Jeff Beck, which has an orchestral string part that just grabs my emotion for some reason. There's also "I Need You Tonight" by ZZ Top. It contains some amazing

rhythm guitar harmonics behind the lead guitar sections, that reminds me of some of the feelings of being a teenager.

Some tunes like this seem to tell an unwritten, unspoken emotional story in my life that can't be put into words. It's a total right hemisphere experience which makes my eyes tear up sometimes. Then I started thinking that when my brain wears out, these profound feelings it has toward these songs will be gone. No one else I know will feel them (1).

Then, my heart imagined what it would be like at the moment of transition, to give it all up to God. My heart felt like it was standing at the edge of a huge expanse, like when I saw the Grand Canyon years ago. My heart felt it was about to go forward into the expanse, letting go of all fear. My face totally relaxed, I started mouth breathing, breathing deeper than usual. I felt the relief of the release of all the earthly concerns starting to lift off of my heart.

Then my heart realized it was simply standing on the edge looking in for a brief moment, and the feeling disappeared. It might have been a glimpse of what my hospice patients feel. (**6/24/20**)

(1) 12/7/25 footnote: This year I finally recorded some lyrics on an old original song titled "Ghost of the 70's" that expresses the idea of certain old songs playing my heartstrings, and how that "song of the heartstrings" itself will be lost from the physical world once I pass into the spiritual world.

Function vs. Malfunction

As long as my body and mind are functioning well, I'm happy to be here. Otherwise I'm fine with going to watch over some of my loved ones, while reuniting with others.

Total Surrender

Dear God, for years I've been struggling to give my sin up to you so you can dispose of it, and to give any glory I feel, up to you because it is rightfully yours. One day it will be a relief to give my soul up to you as well, and the struggle will be done.

Emotional Memories

When my physical body is gone from the earth, many of the memories that tugged at my heartstrings will be gone from the earth, too.

On first consideration, there is a grief that occurs, when realizing that many of these memories will not be passed along to others. Then as you work through the grief, the eventual surrender to God's plan and God's superior knowledge, brings a relief.

Much Left

It strikes me as I drive along I-65 at age 62, that I have driven along this highway for about 46 years, and that I don't have near that much driving left to do on it. It's sort of a relaxing feeling. (7/10/20)

Bravery

You know, as you get older, you've got to become ok with dying. Otherwise it would be such a horrifying prospect that you would endure all kinds of pain in order to postpone it. In fact, I think it may be very difficult to perform any brave action if your mind is afraid of dying.

That Point

I don't want to live in a decrepit state.

Food

If I should find out I had only a few months to live, I might go off my diet and eat huge quantities of everything that tastes good, because my last concern is trying to look a certain way at my funeral. (9/27/20)

The Ride

Our spirits ride around in our bodies for a few years, but it's the sudden separation that saddens loved ones.

The Door
At age 62, I perceive categories of situations that recur. More often I say, “Here we go with this one again.” But at least the solutions become clearer. The only one that seems new and paradoxically exciting in a way is the approaching transition out of the physical world. It is not really paradoxical though, considering the destination is Heaven. (10/4/20)

With a Grain of Skepticism
In countless interactions with others, we have countless my-side-of-the-story recollections. Unfortunately, when our human bodies pass away, so do many of those my-side-of-the-story’s, leaving other people to interpret what we meant when we said or did something in the past. Those who listen to such interpretations would do well to remember that when one side of the story is gone, it doesn't necessarily mean the other side of the story is the correct one. (11/20/20)

Potential
I used to see potential for myself when looking at the world around me. Then in my 50’s, I no longer saw it. But today I was praying and then saw a tree against the blue sky, and felt an exciting potential for life to carry on, even though my physical one will eventually cease. (10/29/17)

Old Car
When you get old, you realize there will one day come a time when your body will no longer be an adequate vehicle for your spirit to ride around in. (2021)

The Shell
One day when my body has sufficiently broken down in old age, I will leave it as a baby animal leaves its broken shell. (12/25/22)

The Flash
When my body dies, the best of what’s left of the worldly me won’t be in the grave or in an urn. It’ll be on a digital storage device. (5-25-23)

Rebound
My aim is to help people be stronger in their lives, not for them to be sadder at my funeral. But if some are sad, hopefully I helped them grow strong enough to rebound from it. 6/25/25

Epitaph
If I had to do it all over again, I would work on being more thankful to the Lord, because this positively affected everything else I did. (7/10/25)

Posthumous A.I.
I have heard recently that a person's written works can be uploaded into certain a.i.'s so that the user may have somewhat of a discussion with the a.i. based on the works. This is presumed to be sort of like a "discussion with the author". But since online widespread availability of a.i. began around 2023, I have seen that it makes assumptions, often incorrect, about the connections between two topics. Any attempt to apply a.i. to my writings would likely result in some similar errors at unpredictable points, so I would keep the possibility of errors in mind, if anyone ever does this with my notes. However, I have to admit, if I had some opinionated writings by my Dad, I would definitely try it. But then I knew him well, so I could spot an error just as well. (8-12-25)

What Not
Like most people I've made some bad decisions. But let those who remember me hear about those decisions with the view that they might learn what *not* to do. 8/24/25

End of chapter - Death

Ego, Id, Superego

Introduction

Freud was wrong about a number of things, but his basic idea of the Ego, Id, and Superego have been useful in explaining parts of human nature, although I'm not sure I agree with him on all of the fine details.

Years ago, I wrote these paragraphs:

"Since people define ego as selfishness, we could ask what would the “ego-less” mindset be called? It needs, a simple, catchy name. Possibly “The zero-ego mindset” or something like that. However, Freud called the Id the selfish part, so to be correct, it should be "zero-id mindset", but that doesn’t have a ring to it and most people don’t know what the id is anyway."

And:

"Recall Freud’s concept of the id and ego. I think of the id as a bowel movement. The best thing to do is release it to the proper channel, and walk away from it, knowing this procedure will have to be repeated time and again, in order to avoid becoming full of it."

Since then, I have come to believe that the id does have a proper function within certain boundaries and when running on a certain fuel. These later ideas are explored in this chapter.

End of Introduction

That’s Insulting

There is the notion that, "If you feel someone has landed a blow to your ego by insult, then consider the thickness of your skin." Actually, people over the years have mis-defined Ego. When you feel insulted, it is probably the Id or Superego that feels it. The rational Ego is then supposed to be in charge of tempering the emotion-based Id & Superego, reigning them in so that while the insult is felt, the reaction to it does not go overboard and become destructive.

Altruism vs Egoism

As we interact with a variety of people, it seems that in one way our social lives are like movies where only the hero can tell when someone is a deceptive shape-shifter. The good guy might see just a glimpse of the shape-shifter’s true face for a split second, as the shape-shifter gives him a chilling look, knowing that only the hero can see the shifter's true nature.

This fantasy analogy of good-guy bad-guy plays out every day, but between the altruistic and the self-righteous, between those who would step in front of you to take the bullet, and those who would suddenly step behind you. (substack 2/17/23) (significant edit **12/7/25**)

Shifters

We may not be shape-shifters, but we can be perspective shifters. (6/22/22)

Hypersensitivity, Blame
Along with the trend of people becoming more sensitive, unfortunately comes the trend of wounded egos increasingly pointing fingers at others.

Praise
The id accepts praise like a drug abuser accepts drugs.

Sacrifice During a Conversation
In conversations, there is a difference between defending an idea to save your reputation, and defending an idea for which you would gladly sacrifice your reputation. The latter requires a bravery that may sometimes be necessary in great numbers for the free exchange of ideas to even continue on in a society at all. (Substack 8/3/23)

Funny Flexibility
You can say something funny for a variety of reasons. One is to get a good feeling for yourself when people laugh. Another is to give a good feeling to others. Sometimes it's a lopsided mix of both. Often the heart (emotion) can tell mostly which one it is before it comes out of your mouth.

But equally interesting is that sometimes if you recognize it, you can quickly change the reason from the selfish to the selfless, or quickly decide not to say it, going for the God-given deep satisfaction of doing right (dopamine plus oxytocin), instead of feeding the addiction of instant gratification (dopamine without oxytocin).

With the Id being the emotion-based pleasure-seeking pathway in the brain, I think it can be used properly to feel good from a God-given deep satisfaction, or it can be used improperly to feel good from selfishness.

Subconscious Id
Most everyone knows that we are all sinners, but few know that sin often operates subconsciously.

Manifestations of the Id
Sometimes the id may act like a child throwing a tantrum, getting pleasure simply from some anger release. Other times it can be like an adult-sized tantrum, causing us to say or do bad things for its own pleasure ("anger-thrills"), that we'll have to apologize for later.

The solution is the Ego frequently reminding itself to be vigilant for it. Notice if you are starting to get just a twinge of becoming irritated about something - that may be the first sign that the Id is about to act out, so you can put it in time-out. (12/8/25)

Layers
One of the great psychological battles many of us face within ourselves is the id taking credit for the pleasurable actions of the self, adding a "layer of credit" to the id every time, so that it keeps growing. Properly, credit should be given to God for everything, because "God works all things together for good for those who love him."

Immediate impulse tells us we feel good by adding these credit layers to the id, but in the long run they cause insecurity due to fear of their removal by things that happen day to day, due to the increased sense of responsibility for maintaining them, an increasing juggling act.

A frequent self-reminding by the Ego must override the selfish impulse, so that we go ahead and give credit to God, give up our own worry of the physical future, knowing that it is "God only" who is all knowing and all powerful, which sends the "gratitude layers" to the id, so that it operates properly as it should, feeling good through gratitude.

Affinity
Thinking back to my pre-marriage years, I was in some relationships that obviously did not work out. Keeping in mind that a weak, fragile ego is not a good thing, one psychological realization that comes to mind due to this retro-reflection is that due to repeated bombardment, sometimes your affinity for another person becomes only as deep as the shell of their ego.

Ego
The horse may be properly before the cart, but the driver who is behind the horse, guides it, for better or worse.

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The Mechanics of the Good Person

Part 1

A quick Freudian reminder: the Id is like the devil or bad guy on one shoulder, trying to convince the head (Ego) to believe whatever it says. The Superego is like the angel or good guy on the other shoulder, trying to convince the Ego to stay within moral bounds, out of trouble. The Ego is like the referee in the middle, making the final decisions. This is oversimplified, but is used here to illustrate.

We might easily agree that the Id is emotion-based, while the Ego is reason-based. If your Ego is not carefully watching your Id, the Ego might surmise that "Hey I'm one of the good guys" and then assume you are immune to any mischievousness initiated by the Id.

Be aware that this is an open-door opportunity for the Id to surreptitiously latch onto that very concept of you as "one of the good guys" which can then sour into a type of conceit. The Id is pretty sneaky. This door of opportunity must be guarded with a spotlight shining down from the reasonable Ego, so the front of your mind can spot the Id creeping towards that door.

But I believe the morals-based Superego is also emotion-based. Consider this: If left unguarded by the Ego, the Id and Superego can end up playing a game with one another, using your head (Ego) as the volleyball. Your Ego is supposed to decide what the Id and Superego are allowed to do, not the other way around.

It works like this: When the Ego is weak, it allows the Id to go for the thrills it wants, including the thrill of conceit, before the referee even realizes it.

Then the Superego steps in with its moral superiority and if also unchecked, causes severe, excessive guilt and self-punishment. Finally the weak Ego decides there needs to be some pleasure instead of all this guilt, so it allows the Id to take over again and the cycle continues.

The Id and Superego both crave their heart-based drama, albeit two different kinds of drama: unfettered pleasure on the one hand, and unfettered guilt on the other. Yes, sometimes the heart can get into a pathological craving of negative emotion, because it can be fueled by extreme emotion of most any type. Also, because it is the heart, it doesn't have to make sense to the head.

So the referee (Ego) needs to be strong enough to keep the Id and Superego in reasonable limits. In your head, focus on being the adult in the room, which puts you in the viewpoint of the Ego. You might step back and look at what the Id or Superego are doing, and say "No that's just too much. I'm not getting anywhere long-term with that."

In moderation, the Id may be used properly to enjoy many things in life, and the Superego may be used properly to help the self stay within moral bounds. The Id should not be allowed to get into pleasure-seeking at the expense of the self or others, and the Superego should not be allowed to get into self-punishment so extreme that the self never heals.

But it takes a lot of vigilance, always staying in the viewpoint of the Ego, so the Id or Superego don't sneak up and knock you in the head before you know what hit you. No more volleyball.

Part 2

Despite what many think, there is a link between the spiritual and the psychological. The framework of Part 1 rested upon the person alone having a conscience, from which springs up a desire for fairness. The conscience is moral, so it can be thought of as the Superego.

If the conscience is like an engine, what kind of fuel powers it? The fuel for both the heart-based Id and Superego can simply be emotion. Unrefined emotion is an inefficient fuel that may run the self at times but not

at its best quality. The self may also spend inordinate amounts of time dealing with raw emotion clogging up the works, taking self-time away from commanding the wheel, leaving it rudderless at intervals.

Many of us have this Superego conscience engine. But consider if there was a way to refine the raw fuel that powers it. What happens to your conscience when someone does you a favor or even saves your life? These situational gifts can refine and increase the power of raw emotion, used by the conscience engine.

Inside the conscience engine there is a component I call a “gratitudifier”. When someone does you a great favor, for example letting you off the hook for a mistake you made, the gratitudifier refines raw emotion into a more focused fuel.

The fuel is refined, based on the nature of the favor done, and on the nature of the favor-giver.

Has anyone done you any favors lately? Like letting you off the hook for a mistake you made? How about a billion mistakes? The bigger the favor that has been granted you, the more gratitude you have. And the more powerful the conscience fuel becomes.

If your higher power has granted you a favor that is so big that it can never be paid back, your gratitude will refine a fuel that burns so brightly inside that the urge to make effort, to serve and protect, will be irresistible. And even though your efforts will not be perfect, the favor has already been granted that imperfection is okay.

However, knowing all these things in the head will not transport the self even one inch forward, unless the head sits with the heart, as they dwell together for a time, on the immensity of the favor that has been done. (12/23/23) (Substack 12/23/23)

Humility

Part of having an appropriate humility is that you don’t have to bring your whole physical self and situation down because you are guilty of some previous lofty over-confidence. If you look around and say, "I was so bad previously that I don't deserve any of these good things or relationships," that's the superego going overboard, unsupervised by a weak ego.

Make effort to attach your ego to the authority of God, and it will be a strong supervisor. Your effort won't be perfect because you're human. But it will be much stronger than otherwise.

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The Mechanics of Ethical Thought

And How Your Heart Might Throw a Spanner in The Works

1. Go forward, 2. Be helpful, 3. Give the credit to God, 4. Don’t overthink it, 5. Repeat.

This cycle can be thought of as a psychological engine. But when you "give the credit to God" and “don’t overthink it”, something in your mind might feel, “What about me? Don't I get credit for something?” This appears to be some part of the self that feels shut out of the process.

There are 2 ways to look at it:

1. "This part of self feels innocent, like a child almost, and you cannot discard or disregard the innocent!"
2. "This is an immature way of thinking, and should not be personified." It must be let go of and discarded as we learn and grow, like we gradually & naturally let go of thought patterns from our childhood. Immaturity and innocence overlap greatly when we are small children, but they are not the same thing.

“I didn’t mean to!” is sometimes a poor excuse for negligence, so it becomes less valid as we grow & accept more responsibility. But we don’t discard any innocence along with it.

Jesus said “Be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.” Be *shrewd* and innocent, not *immature* and innocent. So this letting go is a part of growth, not decline.

As we grow and gradually become more self-sufficient, we discard self-centered thought patterns. One of

those patterns that may linger on is the "immaturity of the id", which runs on the fuel of adoration, either from the self or from others. In our “psychological engine” as noted previously, "id immaturity" runs contrary to step 3 ("give the credit to God"). And it will try to creep back into the picture if step 4 ("don't overthink it") is not followed.

Remember, "id immaturity" is not a person to be grieved over when gone, but instead it is a pleasure-seeking thought pattern, which is naturally replaced during the aging process.

But the heart may say, “What or who will you replace the selfish pleasures with?” I have written before about the different fuels that the heart can use. One is adoration, another is a *deep satisfaction* from knowing you are bravely doing right regardless of the outcome.

One analogy is a "dual fuel" generator engine that runs on either gasoline or propane. Gasoline is a widely available fuel but eventually spoils. Think of this as the "adoration" fuel. Propane is harder to find but doesn’t spoil, and it burns cleaner. Think of this as the "deep satisfaction" fuel.

Changing fuels is easier said than done. But recognizing a problem first, puts you on the way to a solution. One problem is that an **overreacting superego** can make you feel **undeserving**.

Things Are Going Too Good

One way this "undeserving" problem happens is: When things are going good, the superego in the heart may overreact and feel, “*Things are going too good*. Does the Self really deserve good things if it hasn’t always perfectly followed step 3 (give the credit to God)?”

The Bible tells us that we do deserve things to go well whenever God decides, because even our surrender and praise and thankfulness will never be perfect, and yet since we are forgiven for that imperfection as well as others, God intends for us to go forward and do more good and right things anyway, in the face of feast, famine, or anywhere in between.

We can realize all this when we are in step 3 (give the credit to God), but the reason for step 4 (don't overthink it) is to prevent the superego from overreacting again and trying to be the internal judge and jury, dictating what we deserve, when God only, is the one really in charge of what we deserve.

But the two emotion-based characters, id and superego, like children, can become cunning if the ego (the parent in the room) is not watching, and may devise other ways to grab the steering wheel of your conscious.

The Bored Id

Let's say we are being helpful as in step 2, and we also give God the credit (adoration) in step 3, instead of giving credit (adoration) to the id. If the ego is not vigilant, the id may feel, "Running on this *deep satisfaction* fuel is not a quick dopamine jolt, like adoration. It's boring and tiresome, so I'm going to slack off the helpfulness and decrease the intensity of giving God the credit, and give myself a little self-praise jolt break.

Then of course the superego steps in and says "Look at the id, getting selfish again. The whole Self here is imperfect, so it doesn't deserve for things to go well", or “We can’t have nice things”. This is yet another way the superego can make you feel undeserving.

But before the superego overreacts like this, the ego should grab the wheel back, so that you can see the overreaction "I don't deserve good things" is separated out, in front of you, so it can be dealt with, instead of feeling like it *is* you, inside your mind.

Once separated, you can then realize that the superego's overreaction results in self-destruction, which you don't need. You need to feel **Forgiven** for never being perfect so you can keep moving forward attempting to do right, and then you can feel and run on the deep satisfaction fuel, knowing you are attempting to do right, imperfect as it may be.

Feeling Forgiven *allows* the fuel changeover process, from adoration to deep satisfaction, that keeps our psychological generator engine running cleaner & more reliably. Even though it may take years in some cases, feeling Forgiven & then feeling Deep Satisfaction naturally leads into an additional feeling of deep and strong Commitment to doing right: Feeling Forgiven => Deep Satisfaction => Commitment to doing right.

And what is right? Protecting the innocent, including the innocent Self. For most people, the Self is *innocent* most of the time. But if your superego is overreacting, it may make you feel *guilty* most of the time. This of course is disproportionate.

Babies are the only group of humans where 100% of them are innocent 100% of the time. But once we've grown up & become adulterated, we can still be innocent victims at times, where we will need some type of protection.

If you happen to be standing in a store when it is robbed, and you get shot, you are an innocent victim in this situation, even though you may not have been innocent of telling a lie earlier in the day. But your overreacting superego, the internal judge & jury, jumps at a chance to take these things out of context, making a sweeping overgeneralization and oversimplification, demanding a standard of 100% perfection at all times before it will allow you to feel innocent in general. So you must first feel Forgiven.

And how can you feel Forgiven in the largest, spiritual sense? God must forgive you. And how can God forgive you? Only if the price of your misdeeds has been paid. And how can it be paid? Someone paid that price by enduring hell. How do I know this is true? By **belief** alone. It's beyond science. And who did this for me, not asking for repayment, and absolving me of guilt? God's Son, Jesus.

Notes on Overthinking

There comes a point with spiritual belief that overthinking or second guessing starts to chip away at it. And when the heart is really on board with #4, "Don't overthink it", there is a feeling of relief in not being faced with the chore of great consternation or worry.

One application of #4 is that when things are going well, the heart doesn't create its own drama. If the 2 billion "destitute" people in this world could see us Americans griping about our problems, creating and elevating our own problems in our minds, they might get a good laugh out of it, if it weren't so tragic.

Our minds are built to deal with adversity, so some of us create our own without realizing it, just to feel useful. Instead, go stronger toward helping others. This will give you some worthwhile, not useless, adversity. Don't create your own drama. In other words, don't overthink it.

Just as a reminder, and this is good to think about on a daily basis, if you quit overthinking your spiritual belief, but then get a nagging feeling that a part of you is lost, it's probably an id-immaturity or even superego-immaturity that was lost but is making an attempt to come back by keeping a foot in the door. However, don't personify those pathological pathways. You're not losing a beneficial part of yourself. God gives you new types of humble, yet determined, pathways to replace them. We all see enough drama in daily life without creating more and adding it into the mix. With spiritual belief, overthinking and second guessing, like the buck, stops somewhere.

(~2018, with significant edit **12/14/25**)

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Tone Down

Best to have the Ego (head) gently guide id and superego (heart) which means a stronger Ego so that the id and superego don't continually go back and forth, fighting like children. Ultimately the Ego should tone them both down. The self can then enjoy things without going wild, and can also have some appropriate regret when warranted, but not to the point of wallowing in regret. (4/7/23)

Evil Twins

Recently I saw a Mel Gibson interview for the recently released film "Father Stu". He gave some personal info about how he sees his ego, which he called "Bjorn". He said he tries to keep it buried in the back yard, occasionally going back there to put another teaspoon of dirt on him, to make sure he stays there.

Like most people, Gibson misidentifies what Freud called the ego. Bjorn is likely an "uncontrolled id", the evil twin of a "controlled id".

Likely a criminal impulse comes from an uncontrolled id. But I got to wondering, when a police officer shoots someone to protect the public, does this come from ego, id, or superego? I would say it's a "controlled superego" the vast majority of the time. (4/14/22 with significant edit **12/13/25**)

Good Man

In my 20's, I was working out at home one day doing some bar curls. On the last 2 reps I was really straining and for some reason the thought popped in my mind that I am a good man, and all the strong emotion that comes with that thought, feeling that I would use whatever strength I had to help people, protect the innocent, build instead of tear down, at this very second and going forward without letting up. I belted out "I'm a good man!" on the next to last rep and the feeling stayed in my mind strongly through the last rep and for a half minute after. Then I began wondering about why that thought occurred. At the time I thought that strenuous exertion can sometimes unveil your basic underlying psychology, and all the pieces seemed to fit. There was a feeling that this was not a selfish realization but instead a feeling of service, now and going forward. However, through the years this feeling did not occur as strongly nor often as I had desired.

Now at 64, I have been thinking about this occurrence and that I must add to the previous analysis. The feeling of being a good man has been given by God, so I give the credit to Him in order for the service and selflessness to continue forward, regardless of any physical exertion. But this must take the form of occasional prayer, including that God is number one.

Just one of these prayers on one day is not sufficient because if the ego is not vigilant, the Id will surreptitiously slip into the control booth and try to grab the control stick. More frequent prayers are like spiritual exercise, helping me to become aware of when the Id is attempting to do this, shining a light on the intruder so that his activity is not so surreptitious and can be recognized and subverted immediately by the moral-based Superego. Then this whiplash back and forth between the Id and Superego can be ultimately tempered down by the rational Ego. (**4/15/22** with minor edit 12/13/25)

Freud & Jesus

By introspection, it seems the id can be happy with the love from the Lord, & the superego can be happy with the Lord's forgiveness. Since Christianity is the religion that emphasizes forgiveness of the soul, it likely fits better in the minds of those with a strong self-judging type of superego. In this type, the superego is a moral perfectionist that is inwardly directed, and a person might experience a sudden heavy out-of-proportion guilt for doing something that's just slightly wrong, and/or may have been an unconscious error. This person would benefit greatly from Christianity, and indeed, I suspect Christianity may retain more followers of this type, because of the extreme need for forgiveness from the inwardly directed perfectionist type of superego. (4/21/23)

Brain Chemistry

If dopamine is the sensation-seeking, pleasure-feeling id, then what is "the satisfaction of holding to virtuous principle"? Would it be dopamine through the superego? Or some other? Oxytocin? (4/21/23)
Update – After a brief search, I found that it may be the "Happiness Trifecta" of oxytocin, serotonin, & dopamine as described by Eva Ritvo, MD. (2023)

Go Wild

A component to be considered along with the id and superego is the imagination. It's like a supercomputer that can be used or misused by either one. So it is of course a double-edged sword. With the superego, it should be used to help you suspect where danger may lurk, in dangerous times. But in times of general overall safety, one way the superego must use it is to suspect that the id may grab it and let it go wild. (4/23/23)

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Brain Chemistry, Freud, and Our Higher Power

A quick summary for those not familiar with Freud's Ego, Id, and Superego theory:
The Id ("I" first) – The "pleasure seeking" tendency, commonly depicted as the "devil on one shoulder".
The Superego (conscience) – The "rule follower" tendency, commonly depicted as the "angel on the other shoulder".
The Ego – The "referee" (decider) tendency, commonly depicted as the person in the middle.

In a mentally healthy person, the Ego considers the Id and Superego, then makes realistic decisions. Keep in mind that the "angel and devil" analogies may not always be appropriate; there are times when the Id and Superego act appropriately, & times when they do not.

I have a theory that in many people, there is a certain interaction between these three Freudian tendencies regarding the moral action of helping others, and also that there is certain brain chemistry involved.

When the Self (the whole human being) performs a moral action (helping), the Superego (conscience) gives the green light for the Ego (decider) to send an unselfish reward to the Heart (emotion pathways in the brain). But the Superego, holding up one warning finger, says that if the Id (pleasure-seeker) steps in to claim credit for the good deed, there will instead be a green light for guilt to be sent to the Heart. Hmm.

So the Ego decides to properly give the credit to the Higher Power (related to a person's religious faith). Once the Superego sees this, it green-lights the unselfish reward, and the Ego then sends it to the Heart.

This unselfish reward may be felt by the Heart as a "deep sense of relief". The relief is felt for the following reasons:
(a) a moral action has been done;
(b) the Self is relieved of any feeling of responsibility for making moral actions continue, since it is ultimately the Higher Power who guides the Self, and
(c) a thankfulness directed to the Higher Power for a & b.

This relief does not feel like the immediate dopamine rush one gets from a roller coaster, Some evidence indicates it could possibly be the Happiness Trifecta of oxytocin, dopamine, & serotonin (1).

The Superego should remain on guard however, because the Id will try to use the argument "Why should I be shut out?" The Superego should alert the Ego of this, and the Ego should check that the Unselfish Reward is still in place and hasn't been changed over to a Selfish Reward (a dopamine rush or possibly an addiction to the Happiness Trifecta). The brain mechanism for this could possibly be described as "overhelping", or an addiction to helping (2).

Reading and knowing this information by itself will not get someone to the point of understanding. The

connection between these Freudian tendencies and the Heart, comes only when someone sits for a period of time and imagines these scenarios.

Think of a moral act you did. How did your heart feel? Did you feel guilt for feeling good about yourself? Did you feel you didn't deserve the credit? If so, who deserved the credit? Did you get an addictive rush from it? Did your Heart feel anything? Was your Heart totally at peace? If so, did you feel a Higher Power was involved?

This is a developing theory and input from others is greatly welcomed.

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(6/18/23) (Substack 6/18/23)

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Thrill & Guilt Cycle

I wonder if the id & superego sometimes conspire to send drama to the heart by starting a "thrill & guilt" repeating cycle. Does the superego get a reward for punishing the self, being the martyr, being right? Do we love being wrong? Does it bring a strangely familiar humiliation? Is it like Stockholm Syndrome? What would be the brain chemistry reward system & neural pathway for all this? Does the heart actually feed on all emotions, including regret, anger, & fear? What is the self-sabotager? Could it be the superego setting us up for a fall by letting the id run rampant for a while, or are the id & superego subconsciously complicit in this? Or is it just the ego being so weak that the id and/or superego often go unsupervised? (6/23/23)

The Road

Cliché's – There's answers in 'em. Like "Moderation is the key". A strong ego is able to assess likelihoods, and is able to see that stepping outside moderation often causes trouble.

But seeing is not doing. Is the ego then able to hold onto the behavior steering wheel when the heart (id & superego) is attempting to grab that wheel?

One thing that gives the ego better grip strength on the behavior wheel is when the ego says to the id & superego, "Aren't you guys tired of the drama of self-sabotage, where the id grabs the wheel & does something selfish, then the superego grabs the wheel & lays down guilt everywhere, so the self will slip and fall on it, and do something stupid again in the name of teaching the self some sort of shame lesson?" Sometimes the heart will respond positively to the "Aren't you tired of this?" realization.

The ego may also ask the heart, "Aren't you tired of holding the ultimate responsibility for your actions?" The heart may answer "Well, yes." Whereupon, the ego may offer to hold the car in the road while the heart relaxes.

Of course, if the ego is plugged in to God as the authority, the heart is more likely to trust it, since the heart has a lot of positive experience with God. (**6/24/23** with minor edit 12/15/25)

Good Heart, Bad Heart

My theory is that Freud's superego as well as the id, are components mostly of the emotional Heart, while the ego is mainly the rational Head. The Heart has many facets but 4 of them can be seen like this:
The good id: love now, short term empathy, action, enjoyment of "good fun".
The bad id: anger at others, loves controversy and thrills regardless of who is offended, enjoyment of "bad fun".
The good superego: 10 commandments, empathy, moral love, God's love.
The bad superego: prosecutor, overblown guilt, anger, long term simmering, self-sabotager.
The ego can be seen as the Head, the watcher, referee, rational/logical decision-maker, realist.

If you feel pulled back & forth between the id & the superego, then the ego is weak. The conscious should step above the Heart into the Head platform & focus on the reality of these conflicting facets of the Heart and decide (judge) which one is most appropriate for reality at the time. (2023)

Not a Toy

Review: The id is the pleasure-seeking attitude in us that is not concerned with morals, and can get us in trouble if unchecked. The superego is the moral attitude in us that is concerned with keeping the id in check, but can go overboard and cause crippling guilt or even self-sabotage. The ego is like the parent figure, the head, the reasoner, decision-maker, or referee between these two heart-based id and superego attitudes. When in proper balance, all three have acceptable functions in everyday society.

So, it can be said of the imagination: "This is not a toy." Through introspection, strive to give the ego control of it, not these heart-based id or superego attitudes, who tend to take things too far. The id and superego are emotional motivators and so can take part in the imagination, but the ego parent-figure should have the ultimate say-so on how it is used. (6/16/23) (Substack 8/5/23)

Kid

It might be appropriate to refer to the id as "the kid", more often than not. (2023)

Brain Rewards

The ego task of getting the id to sit back down is also a part of the overall purpose of giving to others, because the practice of it readies the overall self for the giving process. The older I am, the more instantly I can feel the id standing up, trying to grab the steering wheel, because it feels like a sudden jolt of dopamine. This feels different from the brain reward of the "Happiness Trifecta" (oxytocin, serotonin, & dopamine) as described by Eva Ritvo, MD, which is described as the brain reward for the act of giving. And the act of giving in turn might be a function of the ego being strong enough to overrule the id, when it decides to take the advice of the superego. (10/18/23)

The Superego Conscience

One of the most important spectrums in a person's mindset is the conscience or the conscientiousness spectrum. It seems to be most strongly connected to the superego, the arbiter of guilt. (11/24/23 with significant edit **12/15/25**)

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Talladega Nights

There's a scene near the end of the comedy movie Talladega Nights where the dad socially sabotages what would have been a pleasant family outing at Applebee's. The way it's portrayed, the dad just has such an ingrained "unrestrained id" that he can't help himself.

Unfortunately this does play out in real life at times, to various degrees. Some might say the dad had an oversized ego. I suspect it is the result of a weak ego.

Paraphrasing Freud's definitions, the Id is like the devil on one shoulder, the Superego is like the angel on the other shoulder, and the Ego is the rational head in between the two, who must decide which one's advice to follow. The Self is all three.

The Id uses the emotional tool of Self Pleasure. And one thing that can happen is that when the Self is successful at something, an Id that is *unrestrained* says "That's me! I did it!" It takes total credit, ignoring the work of others (and the work of God). Then it becomes overconfident and causes the Self to do and say some outrageous things, feeling there's no consequence for them.

This can happen when the rational Ego is weak. The Ego is supposed to restrain the Id, reminding it that this selfish behavior is not right, and it will get the Self in trouble.

Enter the Superego. It is supposed to be like the angel on the other shoulder, using the emotional tool of Concern. But with a weak rational Ego, it too is *unrestrained* and has to pick up the slack and becomes like the police, judge, jury, and jailer. In this case, it uses the emotional tool of Anger. Then the Superego sees what the

Id has done, and sabotages the entire self in order to stop the Id from continuing this destructive behavior. You might notice that this is not rational thinking by the Superego. Here's why:

Many studies have established that the rational brain functions reside mostly in the left brain hemisphere, while most emotional functions take place in the right brain hemisphere (as opposed to the heart, which was believed for many centuries). I believe that the Ego is rational and mostly centered in the left brain hemisphere, while the Id and Superego are emotional and are based mostly in the right brain hemisphere. This may help clarify the picture of why both the Id and the Superego use these emotional tools and tend to overreact when the Ego is weak. There are some very different brain structures involved here.

To put a stop to this self-punishing behavior, whether brought on by the Id or the Superego, the Ego must think like a parent, watching for any subtle red flags of behavior or even thought. The Id's first dopamine hit delight of self-congratulatory glory hogging must become an alarm to the Ego, which must then declare, "No, we're not getting into that selfishness, you know how it will end, and God is the one who you should be thankful to, for anything good that you do." I believe that the Id should put down the tool of Selfish Pleasure and pick up the tools of Thankful Pleasure and Helpful Pleasure.

Many of us already know that when we're Helpful to others, a warm feeling comes into our minds. This feeling is based on increased brain levels of serotonin, dopamine, and oxytocin, which has been called "The Happiness Trifecta," in certain brain structures and pathways (1).

But being helpful does not go far enough. Consider the person who is compassionate, giving, and helpful to the point that he feels he cannot give anymore. He feels he is not getting enough reward in his mind for all the effort he has put out. He may resort to employing a "point system," where a strict selfishness reward must be gotten from somewhere or someone, to pay the self back for all the giving, compassion, and help that were spent on others. He may be giving to some while power tripping with others, or the giving may be limited in certain ways, in order to get paid back emotionally for all his trouble. This could be the basis for what I call "Selective Compassion."

Enter Thankfulness, or Gratitude. This can be the bedrock upon which the foundation of the mature psychological Self is built. Gratitude has a similar neurological basis to Helpfulness (2)(3), but different brain pathways are involved. Think of a well-balanced Self within the brain, running on all eight cylinders. "The Happiness Trifecta" (noted above) is the fuel. The different brain pathways are the different cylinders in the mature Self. Thankfulness is at least four of those eight cylinders.

We can all find something to be Thankful for, but indestructible Thankfulness must be based on something that cannot change. For that, a person must be Thankful to his Higher Power.

Id
Tool to drop: Selfish Pleasure
Tools to pick up: Thankful Pleasure, Helpful Pleasure

Superego
Tool to drop: Anger
Tool to pick up: Concern

After practicing this, you will get better at it. Science shows that neurons develop new connections over time, when metal tasks continue to be practiced. Then the Id can function at its proper level, experiencing pleasure but without the self-congratulatory BS. The Superego can then drop its Anger tool and become the angel it is supposed to be, picking up the emotional tool of Concern and sending out red flags to the Ego, so it can make final decisions quickly, keeping the Self on track. All will not be perfect, but will be much improved with the continued effort of practice.

This practice involves the Ego stopping and dwelling on Thankfulness along with the Id, like a parent and a child, allowing the Id to feel the pleasure of thankfulness more fully & more often, so it can grow. This can happen during prayer.

These ideas bring to mind the Biblical parable of the Prodigal Son. Most of us have experienced the runaway Id, usually in our younger years, and ultimately the best for all concerned is for the Ego to remember that

lesson, and to keep the Id from running off again by spending time with it, showing it how to use the tool of Thankful Pleasure. (9/2/24)

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Two Types of Humility

There is (a) a beaten-down humility, such as the super-ego delivers to the self to keep it in line with morals, and there is (b) a thankful humility, when the id can get its pleasure from the relief of gifts from the Higher Power. But the Ego must be the sensitive watchman and reminder to the id, so that when the id starts attempting to draw selfish pleasure, like "I did that great thing all by myself", or "I'm lucky", the Ego must stop and have a heart communion with the id, and show it through the screen of imagination (roll the video) of how things would be without The Gifts Of The Loving Higher Power. This movie must continue until the id feels the thankful pleasure. (This is one of the positive uses of the imagination.)

Another way a person could be the victim of his own beaten-down humility is with the false belief that The Higher Power is not loving, but instead is a cruel task-master. Again in this case, the Ego must take the id to the movies, to review all the possible situations where things could be much worse, especially the situation after death. The id needs to watch the whole movie so that it feels deeply grateful. And of course, the Ego must take the id to those movies often. The result will be the thankful humility that balances the self. It won't be perfect, but with striving and effort, it will be much, much better. (9/23/24)

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The Kids in Your Brain

I remember about 40 years ago wondering "What's the best overall attitude to try to have at any given time?" Finally in my early 60's, gratitude emerged as the one attitude left standing, after others had failed from time to time.

But the mechanics of how best to arrive and stay at gratitude have been slow to come into focus. Sure, we hear everywhere that gratitude is best, but why do we keep slipping out of it? Why is it so hard to maintain?

As a little kid, I recall watching certain cartoons where a character would suddenly see a small angel version of himself pop up on one shoulder, telling the character the right thing to do. Then the devil version of himself would pop up on the other shoulder, tempting him with something selfish. This is greatly oversimplified but much later in life, I realized this is loosely what Freud had in mind with his concepts of the Ego, Id, and Superego (1).

Id: wants selfish pleasures, without regard to consequence

Ego: wants to make the best rational decision
Superego: wants morality above all, without regard to consequence

All three compose the mental Self. Now, that last part about the Superego may surprise you – morality without regard to consequence. What? I thought morality was based on avoiding bad consequences. Have a look through the psychological microscope: In many people, the Superego can become a harsh judge, even sabotaging the entire self (2) in a display of irrational emotion, without regard to consequence.

This irrational "without regard to consequence" aspect of the Superego led me to think that both the Superego and the Id are based in the emotional Heart, or more accurately, the emotion-based brain pathways.

For thousands of years, people have recognized the conflict between the Head and the Heart. Thomas Jefferson even wrote a letter in the form of a script, where his Head and his Heart were talking to one another, trying to sort out a conflict (3).

People say, "Follow your heart" but in my view, a balanced relationship between the Head and Heart is similar to the notion of a parent guiding a child. The Head is the parent and the Heart is the child. Each cannot do without the other. The Head must guide the Heart in a gentle manner, so the Heart will continue to trust it. Obviously some deep psychological ramifications here.

I believe the Id and Superego are parts of the emotional Heart, and like a young child, the Heart runs on the fuel of emotion.

The list of emotions is lengthy (4), hence many types of emotion can power the Id and Superego.

The Id, seeking selfish pleasures, can run on joy, affinity, relief, and other pleasures.

The Superego, seeking morality, can run on feelings of righteousness, authority, power, and others.

The Ego seeks a rational balance between the two.

Think of two sibling kids in the back seat. One is about four, and the other is about seven. The Id is more like the four-year-old. The Superego is more like a seven-year-old who has learned that he can tell on his younger brother for doing things Dad says not to do. The Ego is the rational parent driving the minivan in your mind.

Sometimes a pit-stop is necessary. With that small non-verbal inkling that you sometimes ignore, the Superego whispers to the Ego, "Id is not being grateful right now. He's taking credit for all kinds of things, feeling lucky, and starting to get overconfident."

So the Ego says OK, step 1, we'll have to stop and look at some Imagination videos. Imagine how bad things could be:

You could be literally starving to death.
Someone could be sticking a toothpick under your fingernail until you holler out in pain.
You could be bleeding all over the place.
You could be crying thinking nobody loves you (spiritual implications).
Etcetera.

Childlike, the Id then takes several minutes to understand and feel how bad things could be. But here is where the Ego cannot fail to go to step 2. The Ego says to the Id: "Feel the huge relief that things are not that bad."

If the imaginary videos were bad enough, the Id will feel the relief, be fueled by it, and will let overconfidence

fall off by the wayside.

Now, remember the Superego is watching all this and when he sees it, he thinks “OK, I was right. But I feel no relief. where’s my emotional reward?” The story of the prodigal son comes to mind here.

In the story, the impulsive, pleasure-seeking son left home and spent all his money, only to come back after being humbled by life. The father was overjoyed to see the son return home and gave him a big celebration. But the father had another son who had stayed faithfully at home and followed all the father’s instructions for many years. This obedient son was jealous and angry when he heard about the big celebration, asking the father why he never got any celebration and reward.

Such is the Superego at this point. The story then continues with the father telling the obedient son “You are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.” In other words, the Superego was already on the side of morality, and the celebration for that, is ongoing. The Superego does not have to be a perfectionist, using a point system against the Id, to try to earn appreciation from the Ego. The Superego should feel a relief that it does not have to be a perfectionist. A person cannot be perfect, so perfectionism is a fool’s errand.

The Superego should remember that since it is Heart-based, it is still a child compared to the Ego, and is still learning. It should simply point the way to morality, not try to grab the steering wheel from the Ego.

So when you feel that inkling where the Superego is telling on the Id, “He’s enjoying this too much”, check the Id for gratitude, but also check the Superego for the gratitude that it does not have to keep track of those perfection points to earn the relief of appreciation from the Ego.

In both the Id and Superego, the feeling of being given a gift of relief engenders a feeling of love, or affinity for whoever gave them this gift, and engenders a calm that keeps them from going overboard into their tendencies.

Here’s where the Ego decides whether or not to go spiritual. Did this gift of love come from a higher power, or from the Ego itself? You, the reader, will need to figure this out for your particular Self.

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(10-3-24)

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Leftover Unorganized Notes from article “The Kids in Your Brain”:

What accompanies the feeling of gratitude – a feeling of indebtedness or a feeling of relief? If it’s relief, the heart is on the right track. Then, in most people, there will be an automatic willingness to help others – instead of the feeling of an albatross of debt. Gratitude => Relief => Desire to Help

Now, remember that the Superego is based in the Heart as well, and can have an irrational over-reaction. The Ego may need to stop the car and make sure Id and Superego siblings are not having some kind of disagreement in the back seat.

Sometimes, the Superego may think “Hm, the Self having a little too much success here. Id usually doesn’t handle success too well so I’m going to tamp down our success so he won’t have an overreaction and get us in trouble.”

This is how some people sabotage themselves. If you start feeling like you don’t deserve some success you’re having, that’s a clue the Superego may be overreacting. Of course, the Ego needs to check the Id first to make sure he’s fueled by the pleasure of Relief (as noted above). If so, then the Ego needs to say “OK, we’ll have to stop and use the Imagination tool again. Superego, imagine how good things could be, with us using this success as a stepping stone to help others even more, then feel the Gratitude & Relief that we’re doing the moral thing and helping others”.

But it shouldn’t stop there. That feeling of Relief should move into a feeling of Desire to Help. Gratitude => Relief => Desire to Help => Repeat

The imagination tool needs to be used repeatedly because these kids have to be watched. And the proper positive process should end with the Heart feeling “OK, that thing there doesn’t feel helpful, so I’m going to do this thing here because it feels helpful.” That’s how you know when the kids are behaving themselves.

The Id, as part of the Heart, runs on an emotional fuel called Pleasure. Earlier in life, Pleasure involves only physical comforts like food, fluid, gentle physical contact, rest, etc. As we get older, the composition of the Pleasure fuel changes. It of course involves new physical pleasures, but also abstract concepts like humor, feeling accepted, sense of accomplishment, love, avoiding conflict, and more.

That last one, “avoiding conflict” reaches deeper than we might realize. The Id has been running on Pleasure fuel, but when the Self gets in trouble for doing something wrong, there’s Punishment instead of Pleasure, and the Id can’t run on Punishment. To keep that Pleasure fuel flowing, the Superego develops. It says, “Don’t do that thing again or you’ll get in trouble, and the Pleasure will stop.”

A weak ego is a rider that lets the horse (id and superego) roam undirected, unsupervised.

A strong Ego (Head/Parent), decides to let the Id have some pleasures that are socially acceptable as per the guidelines of the Superego.

A strong Ego also decides that the Superego (on the other shoulder) should not become a perfectionist, a harsh judge and jailer that overreacts by heaping loads of guilt on the Self for minor infractions. Such an overreacting Superego can even sabotage the entire Self in order to get its own "Pleasure" from a great power-tripping “I told you so” moment. Since the Id is the one who feels pleasure, I suspect that the superego uses the id as a conduit in order to turn its righteous indignation into a combination of pleasure & anger, which of course is a self-destructive and warped process. I suspect that after this happens a number of times, the id might come to see it as a "familiar" situation, deriving a warped "comfort" just because it is familiar, and feels "justified".

Remember, the Superego is a part of the Heart and can easily jump into these irrational modes, which changes the composition of the Pleasure fuel. You don’t want the Heart to start getting its Pleasure from being a self-bully, or a power-tripping self-judge and jailer.

So the Ego must continue to be the Parent to both Id and Superego. The ego (Head) needs to say consciously: Things are as they are, not how the Heart imagines they are.

Imagination is a tool used by the head and the heart. If used properly, it is the key to allowing the Id & Superego to run on a different fuel: Gratitude.

Id should get its pleasure from the solid practice of the ego directing it to imagine the future without salvation, then being grateful for having that salvation. The Superego should be a nudger and reminder, not a harsh jailer. It should feel the relief of God being in charge so it doesn't have to shoulder the immense responsibility of

being the ultimate judge & jailer.

This should be a daily practice, and practice is a tool.

(10-3-24 with significant edit **12/16/25**)

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Unusual

Strangely, the answer for me is a mix of psychology and spirituality. Usually you won't find proponents of either one agreeing often with each other, except in vague generalities. (2024)

Stepping Stone

Id & Superego need to understand, that when a good thing happens, use it as a stepping stone to increase your help to others. Take that step forward humbly and thankfully, but take it! 6-13-24

Id: Man, I did great on that!
Superego: Ok I will have to sabotage that action so Id will stop being overconfident.
Ego: No, don't sabotage the action. The problem is the Id's REaction. Let's all focus on saying "God did great on that."
Superego: Ok, God did it. So the right way for the Id to feel is to have no expectations of any praise, but to instead feel rewarded by the relief of God's forgiveness.
(**9-1-24** with minor edit 12/17/25)

Pre-emptive Superego

Functioning *properly*, the superego should cause guilt to be felt in the heart when the id causes the self to act selfishly. The guilt should then cause enough displeasure in the id, so that the id doesn't do it again.

But a *maladaptive* superego is also afraid in advance that the id will become or do something that is selfish, so it may sabotage the self in advance, to pre-empt anything that might cause the id to become overconfident.

This is an overly emotional knee-jerk reaction by the superego. The ego needs to remind the superego that perfection is not realistic; balance is realistic. Pre-emptive strikes against the id are especially unfair. The ego should say to the superego, "Look at others who have balanced ego-systems. They are not perfect but they are fairly balanced, and Jesus forgives the imperfections. (9-25-24)

The Bird

People sometimes try to draw you into unnecessary controversy, in non-verbal ways. From invading your space with their stuff, to flipping you off when you're obeying the speed limit – don't take that bait.

It takes two to tango, and their Id wants a thrill. Your Superego should not play God by trying to be the grand arbiter of fairness. It should not react angrily, thinking it has a righteous indignation and a right to punish the moral rule-breakers in your path.

The Superego should instead nudge your Ego to make the right decision, which is that anger is not worth it in the big picture. 7-19-24

Overlap

Explore how the pleasure of thankfulness overlaps with other pleasures. Example: The pleasure of thankfulness for something is separate from the pleasure of enjoying that item directly, but both pleasures overlap. You enjoy having heat in the winter. But when you are also thankful for it, there is the additional pleasure of the relief that you have it, and/or the relief that you avoided the stress of the chilling cold.

The Id should learn to increasingly run on the fuel of thankful-relief pleasure, as opposed to mainly direct pleasure. Even though the Id might not be able to feel both types of pleasure simultaneously, thankful pleasure should outweigh direct pleasure. Then, the Superego is not as likely to become the harsh judge and jailer.

So the Ego needs to remind the Id, "You need to focus more on thankful pleasure." And the Ego also needs to

remind the Superego, “You need to focus on not being a perfectionist.”

The Id can run on the pleasure of the relief of not having to go to hell. It can also run on the pleasure of being loved, and the pleasure of loving someone who will never leave you: God, and your human loved ones who share a spiritual love that lives on because it is bound together with God’s love. The Id can be fed by that pleasure, realizing it ultimately comes from God.

There can also be an over-arching relief that God is taking care of everything that He sees that you need in the big picture, whether you realize what you really need or not.

Being thankful to God means that you see Him as a loving God; you see his actions as best for you in the big picture. And even if you see His gifts as loving gifts, you should not feel a begrudging sense of debt, because one of His gifts is that you don’t have to pay back any debt to Him, which is even more loving.

When most people see & feel God this way, an automatic “help people” and “happy to serve” switch flips on. And as we look to define what help really is, look to the principles outlined in His instruction book. For example, helping a drug addict is not giving him money and saying “Use this to pay your rent.”
9-16-24

Automatic Helpfulness
Interesting that thankfulness is something you feel, but it is also a fuel you can use for helpfulness. In many people, when the heart-based Id and Superego feel the relief of thankfulness, somehow there is an automatic “willingness to help others” that kicks in and flips on. This mechanism and why it occurs, bears more looking into. (10/2/24)

Nice View

When the Id enjoys a nice nature view, it needs to do so with the feeling that it’s a gift from God, instead of the nature view somehow being “mine”. The nice view is a gift not everyone gets, but it does not mean I’m favored by God more than someone else.

The Id must respect that God has some complicated situations set up for everyone beyond our understanding. So when enjoying a nice view, be thankful to God and realize that you are equal to others in his eyes. This is the humble feeling the Id should feel when enjoying God’s gifts.

And likewise the Superego should not say that you are undeserving of those gifts, since the Superego should not play God. The Superego, like the Id and Ego, should be satisfied to be a simply tool in God’s hand.
10/16/24

Not Pride

When you get an advantage in life, God’s not handing you a margarita for your brain. He’s handing you a tool to build something with, and you also get the satisfaction that comes from building it; not a pride that you built it, but a sense of accomplishment that you followed that God-given desire to help people.

Whatever you find yourself doing, say “I’m going to use this to build with” or “be helpful with.”
10/25/24

Ping Pong

Might need to revisit my old theory that the Id and Superego may team up and purposefully play ping-pong back and forth so they both get some kind of thrill. Id goes wild & gets a thrill, then Superego sabotages the situation, puffing up with the might of self-righteous indignation.

The Ego should focus on receiving strength from God in order to stop this ping pong game. Self sabotage is not Biblical because it limits your helpfulness to others.

Took Me A While

On p. 83 of “Hillbilly Elegy”, the author, J.D. Vance, indicates that his Mamaw felt she was not good enough for higher society. This struck me as something I’ve felt before, but not about higher society. My feeling was that I had been sort of a spoiled person until around age 36 or so, then developed a general guilt about it that lasted for decades.

During this time I felt unworthy of making any new lasting friendships. My family life was good, and I was

able to function at work, but it seemed like my Superego was on a tear, sabotaging any friendship that developed beyond a certain point.

It was only after about age 60 where I recalled Freud's concept of the Superego, that I began to work through this situation. In retrospect now, I was not really a spoiled person but probably was a bit lacking on showing general appreciation to other people at times, due to just plain not finding the right appreciative words or actions (1).

I have always been a bit socially clumsy at times, likely due to being mostly an introvert. Because of this perceived lack of social schmoozing success, I believe my Superego finally over-reacted and told my subconscious, "I've had enough of this. If Ron can't achieve any decent degree of smooth socializing, he's going to have to be punished. I'm not going to let him develop any deep friendships if he's going to be this way. It's embarrassing." So my Superego became oversensitive and put that social glass ceiling over my head.

Fortunately now at age 66 I've mostly worked through this with the Lord's help. I'm still socially clumsy at intervals because of a certain degree of unchangeable introvert brain wiring, but since the Lord accepts me as is, the Superego should do so as well. It should not attempt to play God, but instead, its balanced function should be to simply remind the Ego from time to time to keep heading in the moral direction.

So, this chapter on Ego, Id, and Superego includes a lot about how the Superego can over-react. And there is a chapter on Guilt also, which is quite often related to the Superego.

(1) 12/17/25 footnote: This likely has something to do with Broader Autism Phenotype, which I explore elsewhere in this document.

11/18/24

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No Joke

Tell a joke. People laugh. Now, there's two ways to feel good about it:

A. I did it. My talent. I'm superior in this. (Feels more like a dopamine hit.)
B. God worked through me to help these people to feel good. Credit goes to Him. (Feels more like oxytocin.) (1)

This is one way you can tell if the Id is grateful or not. And as we know, gratitude is the one attitude that is left standing after others fail.

(1) 12/17/25 footnote: See elsewhere in this document re: "the happiness trifecta", dopamine, & oxytocin.

11/19/24

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Martin Luther

Recently I saw something that said the 16th century priest Martin Luther would punish himself in different ways to do penance, and one of the ways might have even been whipping his own back. At some point he finally realized that Jesus took the punishment, so punishing the self for sin was not necessary. Martin Luther must have had a strong Superego so it is amazing that he was able to let God bring it down to its proper place, which is that of a reminder, not a punisher. 12-6-24

Communist

The Superego should not go full on Communist - trying to direct all behavior from the top down. The Ego should be at the top, and have the wheel, and negotiate with the Superego and Id. Then the Ego should make the decision. 12-7-24

Superego Craving

Like the Id craves pleasure, the Superego craves authority. Like the Id needs to learn to run on the relief pleasure of being saved by God, the Superego needs to learn to run on the authority of God, not playing God. It should be on the right side, the side of God, be his lieutenant, following God's orders, acting on his behalf, knowing that it is not always aware what his orders will be knowing it is in the lieutenant position because its assessments will not always be perfect knowing that God gives it the authority to remind the Ego it should stay on the moral road, not punish the self by telling the Ego to drive into a ditch (which destroys Helpfulness). As you can see, this is similar to the Prodigal Son parable in the Bible, with the Id being the prodigal, and the superego being the son who stayed home, showing us that Jesus instructs us in this common psychological problem. 1/1/25

Moral High Ground

How can the Superego even claim the authority of moral high ground when it goes too far & plays God, sabotaging the self for what it thinks is fairness, when only God knows with 100% accuracy what fairness is? The Superego's job is to remind the Ego to keep the vehicle between the lines, not to be the driver. The Superego should not become angry and say "OK Ego, you can't seem to drive perfectly straight so I'm taking the wheel and driving us into a ditch!" The Superego should feel the true power of being in its proper and most effective place as a moral navigator, not the true weakness of being outside that place as any kind of punisher. God decides on punishment, not us. 1/2/25

In Concert

I have been focusing in recent years on feeling the difference between the Ego, Id, & Superego. Today I had a sudden curious "alarm" from the Superego that something was wrong – possibly a dropout in gratitude. I wondered which one – Ego, Id, or Superego – actually feels gratitude, or if gratitude is a pathway that might involve 2 or more of them.

It seems that gratitude may be perceived when the Ego, Id, & Superego are singing together in concert, linking certain brain structures together through pathways, like a 3-part harmony. It could be that the Id or Ego may have dropped out of the harmony at the time I felt that alarm. But with the Superego's warning, I suppose it was the Ego that refocused my attention to being thankful to God, which is how things are supposed to work. 8/21/25

Comfort Forever

Focus on letting the id feel the warmth and pleasure of a future of full of comfort, where my spirit is protected forever by God, and then realize that this pleasurable feeling is because of the sacrifice that Jesus willingly gave, so the self can feel a debt of gratitude, and feel the forgiveness of my inability to pay that debt, and the relief that I don't have to be perfect, and feel I can give whatever I can and God will be pleased. 8/22/25

Let The Good Times Roll

One great feeling God sends you whenever you give up the illusion of self-control & acknowledge His actual control, is that you can feel the Superego finally saying "Just let the good things happen & thank God for them" instead of the Superego thinking it has the responsibility for restricting you based on how good it thinks you are. 10.8.25

The Mechanics of Worth

Aside from being thankful to God for saving us from hell, and for inviting us into Heaven, don't forget to be thankful for our "worth during human life" being defined as "forgiven", so the id doesn't need to get worldly pleasure to establish worth, & the superego doesn't have to shackle the self, due to any sinful infractions by the id, or pre-emptively shackle the self, thinking the id might commit an infraction when things are going well. Instead, good things can flow; the self can do good things & receive good things because God is in charge, not the id/superego. This way, the ego is connected to God.

Now, if you get a feeling of indebtedness to God, the superego should not be allowed to view this as a reason to shackle the self because anything you do for God would be inadequate to pay it back. Instead, the ego should remind the superego that this indebtedness is also forgiven - God asks for no payback.

But if you are still moved to take some kind of action, help others as best you can (& help yourself while using the motivation that certain types of self-help can increase your help to others). God does not tabulate your worth based on how much help each of us gives. Your worth is based on His forgiveness. Also, if one person commits more sins than another, you both are totally forgiven. And both of you are given an equal net worth in the eyes of God.

My point here is for us to focus not just on the afterlife, but also on how this forgiveness benefits the id, ego, and superego while we are here. 10-29-25

Brick

It's better to be a brick in a moral wall, than a projectile that takes out a few bricks. Such is the proper vs. the self-sabotage relationship between the Ego and Superego. 11.11.25

Ponder Yourself

Psychology, the science of the brain thinking about itself, suffers more from a certain old saying more than the other sciences suffer from it: "The fox guarding the henhouse". 11.16.25

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The Social Math

I awoke from a dream a little while ago this morning, with one of those feelings that it had an important meaning so I laid there & let interpretations come to mind. The word "austerity" & the phrase "social math" came to mind.

I had dreamed yet another variation of this theme of being back in school but being inadequate at test time. I was so unprepared that I had not even brought any scrap paper to the test, on which to work out any calculations, so I was going around asking other students if I could "borrow a few pieces of blank paper" just before the test was about to start.

The austerity was felt at that point. One student was willing to give me a few sheets, but they were a very small size, & after a couple of minutes I somehow had ruined them by getting them dirty & stained.

I asked a couple of office workers for some paper and not only did they refuse but they made a big deal of their refusal, in order to taunt & humiliate me during this opportunity for their power thrill.

Near the end of the dream as I knew the test had been going on for a while and I hadn't even started it, still wandering around looking for scrap paper, I happened across the study notebook of the student who had been kind enough to give me some paper earlier. It looked like she had gotten through with the test very early and left her notebook off to the side in some walkway, no longer needing it.

As I glanced through it, I saw some of the complicated math problems she had practiced, and I thought, "I have no idea at all how to work these problems." I did find some blank pages in the notebook & thought about tearing them out for scrap paper so I could start the test, then had the thought that it was too late, & I was woefully unprepared. Then I woke up.

Reviewing the dream, I recognized the kind student was someone I recalled from my real-life experience in dietitian school who had always been a straight-A student, & was indeed a very kind person. Near the end of dietitian school at UAB, she had an engagement party & all 12 of the dietetic interns including myself were invited, as well as family & friends. Her fiancé was there. One of the other interns told me that he was apparently a very jealous guy & she worried how our intern friend was going to handle marrying into that

situation. At one point during the party he did come up to me & asked some edgy questions, noticing I was the only male intern. It seemed he artfully & with some subtlety insinuated I might have put myself in the situation of being the only male, in order to try to play the field with better odds. I was polite & focused on my interest in dietetics, so he went on to talk to some other guests after a couple of minutes.

Not sure why my mind chose her to play that part in my dream, except it seemed in real life that she had been great in school, & seemed great in social matters, but somehow had found herself in a bad social situation seemingly through no fault of her own. Maybe I felt in the back of my mind that we were on sort of the same page on the social aspect, being dealt an unexpected blow.

Lately I have been reviewing my life for things I could have done differently, & this has become a larger part of this One Dad's Notes document. After taking some online tests which leaned toward confirming my suspicion of having Broader Autism Phenotype (BAP), I began to see a parallel between complicated math, which many of us don't have the natural capacity for, and complicated social matters, which people with BAP don't have the natural capacity for.

It feels like the back of my mind wrote the dream script to tell me not to keep enrolling in these higher-level social courses that I don't have the natural capacity for; in other words, that I should stop trying to discuss socially some of my psychological, political, and spiritual ideas, and just go ahead and default to small talk pleasantries instead.

But part of me views that as very sad because I have an enthusiasm for exchanging these ideas, especially face to face. So it's like being very hungry with no money, while looking into the window of a ritzy restaurant where everyone is happy socializing and eating well.

I've placed this entry under the Ego, Id, & Superego chapter because these 3 seem to be the scaffolding on which I can climb up and get a better perspective from which to work. At this point, it appears that during much of my life I've had a weak ego which allowed the Id and Superego to alternatively grab the steering wheel and pull it in opposing directions, obviously not allowing me to get very far down the social road.

But better late than never, I find the need to practice attaching my Ego (the parent in the room) to God. It's a practice, not instantaneous. This mechanism works though because it seems my Id & Superego have not respected the authority of the faulty Ego by itself, and will respect it only by a connection to God, being the pipeline to God, taking love and guidance from God.

But the Id & Superego may have disrespected & rebelled against the Ego even with this pipeline to God's authority, because the human Ego is an imperfect, leaky pipeline, & the Id/Superego sometimes demand a perfect parent.

This is where Jesus comes in – the forgiveness of imperfections. Jesus says to the Id/Superego "Look, the best you'll get is God's love and guidance. Your Ego is attempting to do that for you but is going to have some leaks because it's human, just as you are. So respect your Ego, take what you can get through its pipeline to God, because you're absolutely doing it harm by kicking and hitting the pipeline, causing more weakness and leaks. Instead, be supportive, patch up the pipeline by respecting it. Allow it to do its job. The proper boundary for the Id is to enjoy certain pleasures, but not go overboard into the detriment of diminishing returns. The proper boundary for the Superego is to be a moral reminder, not a judge and jury playing God. Respect the pipeline, let it flow and you will both feel the best satisfaction, the kind that works out best for everyone."

Writing this entry, I perceive there has long been a part of my psyche that says in a sad childlike & guilty way, "I just don't want to hurt anyone." It seems like guilt-proneness, which I've written about elsewhere in One Dad's notes.

Guilt-proneness has a genetic component but in the Ego/Id/Superego framework, it might be the Ego refusing to stand up & be the parent for the Id/Superego, viewing them like children whose emotions might be squashed, & seeing any such squashing as cruel, especially regarding the aforementioned "enthusiasm for exchanging ideas", which may be seen by the Superego as an innocent, ethical, & desirable child-like quality of the Id that by all fairness, should not be squashed, and should be protected as one righteously protects an innocent child.

The problem gets to be one of proportion. Id & Superego, being emotion-based I believe, tend to go overboard without regard to proportion, taking a good thing too far & turning it into a bad thing. Being the parent, proportion is one of the teaching tools of the Ego. The Ego needs to keep in mind that while child-like virtues such as enthusiasm should be protected, they should also thrive in their proportionate boundaries if the whole psyche is to achieve somewhat of a balance.

So the "I just don't want to hurt anyone" thought pattern should couple with the "protective boundary" thought pattern just as you wouldn't let a child run everywhere they want. Because without the protective boundary, the Ego, desiring not to hurt anyone, would actually let the Id-child get hurt. So the Ego, from God's love & guidance, needs to remind the Superego that a safe boundary does not squash the innocent child-like virtue of enthusiasm, but instead protects it from running out in front of a figurative car in this dangerous world.

For me at this time, this all probably means that my enthusiasm for exchanging psychological & spiritual ideas should be mostly kept inside the lines of these One Dad's Notes, except for those times where someone is interested in such face-to-face exchanges, which is extremely rare. And it's probably rare because my built-in B.A.P. low capacity for the social math apparently oozes from my pores. But while such a prospect might seem depressing, I take heart in my optimistic ability to choose to see the bright side: The Lord's blessings are abundant, and one of them is a God-given ability to increase my thankfulness for these blessings through practice.

11/22/25

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Blindspotting

I've written before about how the emotion-based id & superego can reach over & grab the "steering wheel of the self" from the ego during any of the ego's weak moments. And I've written about strengthening the ego by connecting it to God. But in this note I want to emphasize how weak the ego can get without continued maintenance of its God connection.

A very weak ego promotes a very strong id/superego. I've observed the id/superego to be so powerful at times that something happens I call "blindspotting". This is where for example I should take an obvious action, like saying "Sounds good, thank you" to someone but the id/superego throws a blindspot on what my reply should be at that second, so no reply comes to mind and I'm just silent.

Sometimes it's more abstract, where I decide to focus on not making so many useless comparisons between people. Then Boom! I say something indicating I just made a big embarrassing comparison.

Thankfully these situations are rare, and we've all had rare moments where we couldn't see something right in front of us like the mayo in the fridge. (Thank you to my wife for helping me through these times.) But the id/superego tends to get involved when there is more at stake, such as trying really hard not to be socially clumsy in front of someone whose opinion of you really matters in your life.

Sometimes it's the superego, giving you the feeling that "These interactions went well today, but now I'll have to bring the you down a notch because you don't deserve to have too much success."

Sometimes it’s the id, giving you the feeling that "I'm just not having enough fun, so I'm going to make you tell a joke" and then it falls flat.

Sometimes I wonder if it's the id & superego working together to create a situation that culminates in some social embarrassment of the self, because with my low self-esteem, embarrassment seems familiar and therefore appropriate. That way, the emotion-based id & superego can feel good about themselves because it feels

"righteously familiar" when a low-self-esteemer feels embarrassed or ashamed.

Thank God that thanking God minimizes these situations, by reinforcing ever stronger that God is ultimately in control & empowers the ego to hold fast to the decision-making steering wheel; that the id/superego is not the decider of my ultimate worth so the id/superego does not have to play "cops & robbers" with my decisions; and that my ultimate worth is based on God's forgiveness, not any sort of warped familiarity based on any overblown emotions. Thank God. (12/8/25)

The Familiar

Thinking back to some past relationships, one hindsight conclusion I reach is that whenever one person in the relationship is the winner in a discussion, the other person doesn't always have to be the loser. I think some people subconsciously hold on to the idea of win-lose simply because it's familiar to them, which is sad. It makes me wonder if the win-lose proponent is just not willing to put forth the effort to change. But it might be more than that.

The magnetic pull of "the familiar" is strong. For example, when we focus on our self-worth being based on God's forgiveness, we let go of the id's immaturity while keeping its clean fun-loving aspect, just as children do as they age.

This is a good thing, but something in the emotion-based heart, possibly remnants of the old immature selfish id itself, might feel that it has let go of a familiar person, an innocent child (an oversimplification which incorrectly assumes immaturity always equals innocence) so there is a feeling of loss. Then there is the temptation to let it come back, if the ego is weak.

If it is allowed to come back, the emotion-based superego, left unsupervised by the weak ego, goes overboard punishing the immature id for misbehaving. So you have all this commotion in the back seat between the older child and the younger child. Instead of all this, the rational ego must pull the car over and remind everyone that something is not always good just because it's familiar (another oversimplification). (~2015 with significant edit **12/9/25**)

Want

Recently I have been struck by the profound next-level nature of my mind simply proclaiming "I want to be fair." This feeling likely originates in the superego, which is morals-based, so it's focused on "fair". But my theory is that the superego is also emotion-based, so it's also focused on I "want", "feel", and "need".

Without a strong rational-based ego to guide the superego, the superego could adopt all sorts of fragile, wacky definitions of "fair" and "moral". Then it will "want" and "feel" and "need" those situations. Although, I believe there's some genetic influence in this process that causes the ego/superego combination to lean towards a morality that desires to help and protect most other people, depending on the perceived innocence of those other people by the ego/superego.

But right now for me it feels like the ego has finally stepped up and assertively taken charge, and chosen to connect itself to God and God's authority for defining morality.

Probably the profundity of this simple explanation in my mind was due to all the introspection over the years which allowed the examination and differentiation of the various mechanics of various mindsets, then leading to the need for one mindset to be the equestrian and take the reins, like a horse needing one confident, decisive rider.

This enhanced need probably released the pent-up urge for high level profundity in the otherwise mundane phrase "I want", so that the ego heard the superego's passionate call for guidance. But the "wanting" or passion for morality faces opposition from other mindset characters that drift into the movie the ego is watching, complicating the plot. Some of these characters may be written-in by the pleasure-seeking id.

After a while of enduring this accumulating complication, a strong ego connected to God will be objective enough to surmise that it's impractical to get side tracked and bogged down in micromanagement, and will go ahead and choose the existing framework of a God-based morality.

This may seem like circular reasoning, that an ego connected to God will choose a God-based morality. I think getting an ego connected to God does have a behavioral genetics component as its first spark, a basic yearning for a higher power (Remember the song "God-Shaped Hole"). So this spark won't be present in all people. If it is, it might not be present to the same type or degree. And the higher power people choose may be a

matter of their experience exposure during life.

But speaking for myself, the God-connected ego choosing a God-based morality is semi-self-perpetuating once it gets started. I say "semi" because the ego must do the maintenance of Gratitude to its God-connection, lest it fall into decay and disarray.

Here, it becomes important for the rational-based ego to know as a practical matter, and for the emotion-based superego to know as an emotional matter, that all is forgiven for any missteps because Jesus took the punishment for those missteps. And it's important for the ego and superego to see any excess guilt as another misstep itself, because Jesus' purpose was that we may move forward unencumbered by that excess guilt, to do more good and right things, all the while giving the glory & gratitude to God, while He sends us all the love we could ever need in return, to fill the fuel tank in our souls. (~2015 with significant edit **12/9/25**)

"Shadow Self" and "Ego, Id, Superego" Reviewed

When I first started this document, it had been years since I reviewed Freud's theory of the ego, id & superego. I had learned about it in undergrad psych classes in the 1980's but forgot all about it until somewhere around the 20-teens when I started some more in-depth introspection.

We all have competing thoughts in our heads at times. Usually it's about avoiding temptations like saying something you shouldn't. But being a Christian and still being interested in psychology, I started to explore these temptations from a psychological as well as spiritual perspective.

After some reading, I started calling these temptations the "shadow self" (a concept of the subconscious developed by Carl Jung). Earlier posts in this One dad's Notes document talk about the shadow self.

After further introspection, it seemed like the shadow self might have a light side as well as a dark side. Then I started reviewing Freud's ego, id, & superego. This seemed like a more appropriate way of describing where these introspections led me.

However, throughout this One Dad's Notes document, I've included my own detailed ideas about the ego, id, & superego that Freud may or may not have agreed with. I've said before that I don't agree with everything Freud theorized, but the ego, id, & superego seemed like a good basic framework to start with. (12.30.25)

Which Is It?

Like learning to drive, introspection into what your id, ego, and superego are doing, gets easier after a while. The more you do it, the more "second nature" it becomes. But now it appears I've driven into a neighborhood full of cul-de-sacs.

Sometimes I feel an odd fear that I'm about to mess up my social situation on purpose, to say or do something that is unpleasant to others. Who is the culprit here, the id or the superego?

Is it the id, rattling its cage because it can't get the thrills it wants (like eating pie all the time or venting some anger at those I vehemently disagree with)? Is the id salivating to create some kind of easy-to-cause adrenaline/dopamine rush situation, even if the longer-term effect is negative, like a drug addict?

Or is it the id and superego working in tandem, since they are both emotion-based (in my opinion), and may have orchestrated a "pass the thrill baton" situation? The id might create a social faux pax, possibly after the superego unleashed it on purpose, knowing what the final result will be. For example, the id might block a memory so that I forget something obvious, or block a polite response that I should have given, so that the id receives its thrill of breaking out of the social norm box.

Then the bad cop superego has the green light to step in and continue the adrenaline/dopamine to the heart by beating down the self with the punishment of humiliation, effectively receiving the supreme thrill of being totally self-righteous, albeit ironically at the expense of the self. The person may get the feeling that "I knew I couldn't keep things going in a good direction, I guess I was totally right about that all along."

Or is it primarily the superego, rising up to once more whip down the self with some disproportionately heavy-handed guilt for even the smallest or most unavoidable human imperfections, such as when the id might start to take a little credit for the self when a good job is done, when the credit should be going to God 100% of the time.

In any case, the id and superego getting out of hand like this is a sign of a weak ego. The ego is supposed to be the parent in the room and keep them both within their social norms.

Whether the problem is primarily the id or the superego, the at least we know the answer to the problem. The answer ends up being not a vicious cycle, but a virtuous cycle:

The ego should resume its proper place as the strong moderator and use the imagination tool, imagining with all depth and horror just how bad hell is. Then after id and superego have finished watching that nightmare movie, they should recall how fortunate they are that Jesus willingly saved them from it, resulting in a deep thankfulness.

That deep thankfulness naturally leads into the "How can I repay you" or "How can I return the help" desire. But since all is forgiven because of Jesus' work, no repayment is needed. Still, we gladly move forward and help wherever we can anyway, satisfying this desire to help, even though we know it won't be perfect, and that imperfection is forgiven.

In short, the virtuous cycle is this:

1. Imagine how bad hell is
2. Thankfulness for being saved from hell
3. Desire to return the help
4. No return help is required
5. Help anyway, satisfies the desire to help
6. Knowledge that our help and other actions are imperfect
7. Knowledge that our imperfections are forgiven
8. Thankfulness
9. Because human nature gradually weakens our thankfulness, start over at #1.

(3/28/26)

End of Topic: Ego, Id, Superego

Fairness

Balance
Jesus said be shrewd as snakes, but innocent as doves. Seems like it's easy to do one or the other, but requires more effort to achieve a balance. Remember, your passion for fairness can fuel this effort.

Fairness Defined
There are people who, despite bad circumstances, seem to fare pretty well in the material world regardless. And vice versa. Realizing that God's idea of fairness and ours do not always match, is part of our appropriate surrender to His superior intelligence.

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Is Life Really Unfair?

There are people who are naturally good at something, but despite not putting much effort into practicing this talent, still seem to perform better than most others. And there are others who work very hard their whole lives and still can't seem to get ahead even a little, while others profit greatly. Worse, there are criminals who rob and kill people every day.

We ask, how is this fair? Why would our higher power allow these things to happen?

These are understandable questions, but they are human-centric. They come from a human-centric way of thinking.

Think of the child who cries when he can't have candy all the time. The parents know this is child-centric thought, and in reality, it's unhealthy to give candy on demand.

Does our higher power know something we don't? Does our higher power have intelligence far beyond the understanding of human-centric thought?

If we believe so, then as a matter of avoiding hypocrisy, we cannot apply the same standard to our higher power that we apply to human beings.

Ok, one standard for our higher power, and one standard for us. At least this double-standard is a fair one.

What are we to do then?
Act on our morals with one another. Be kind whenever possible. But also, a killer needs to at least be put in jail to protect other people.
Trust that our higher power has a plan that we cannot totally understand. And if we never totally understand it, we still have that trust, because our higher power is, well, higher than us.

(Substack 9/5/23)

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Forgiveness
There are different types of forgiveness. But the appropriate types don't require you to be set up for more of the same abuse. (Substack 3/9/23)

Overdone Guilt

When my older son was, I guess maybe about seven, I remember after pulling in to the garage in our Dodge mini-van, he was seat-belted in behind me. I went back undo his seatbelt and found him pinching and twisting the skin on his left forearm. When I said "Why are you doing that?" he answered, "Because I'm a Christian." I explained why Christians shouldn't do that, but I think his young mind couldn't grasp my explanation that Jesus took the punishment so we don't have to.

More than that, it's fair that Jesus took it, as a willing gift to us. At that age, many of us have a limited ability to understand why some seemingly unfair things, like someone else taking your punishment, are actually fair sometimes.

We also might get stuck at the place where we punish ourselves, thinking that's fair because we are not perfect. But the analogy of the soldier may help us get past this. A soldier in the U.S. revolutionary war gave his life willingly so that we could enjoy freedom in our country. Are we then to say "No, that's not fair, we should punish ourselves, instead enjoying this freedom?"

If we did that, it would ruin the soldier's gift to us. Instead of regret then we should thank the soldier and commit to doing right whenever we can, knowing that even our thankfulness won't be perfect, and that imperfect gratitude has also been forgiven because of the work of God's soldier Jesus, and Jesus wishes to simply see us accept that forgiveness and move forward doing many good and right things, now unhampered by any overdone guilt. We should honor him by doing so.

Eyes of God
What's fair in the eyes of God is not always seen by humans.

The Definition Varies
One's idea of fairness is sometimes at odds with that of the general population, which may be right or wrong. But it is also sometimes, and unexpectedly, at odds with God's idea of fairness.

Compassion and Reason
Many of us feel a strong compassion to empathize with and help the innocent. But without proper reason, our compassion is at best misplaced, and at worst, becomes destructive as we may become enablers.

When Jesus said "Love your neighbor as yourself", the word "as" means do not love your neighbor more than yourself nor let him take any unfair advantage over you, both of you being deserving of equal spiritual love, though not physically equal.

Helping the Innocent

I think the human sense of fairness can vary greatly from one person to another. And I think it has a genetic component. In primitive times, most of a population had to feel a sense of remorse (guilt) for wrongdoing. Otherwise, they would destroy even their own people in pursuit of selfish gains. This is true today in most, but not all cases.

There are exceptions to most trends and these exceptions are one part of how genetics works overall. But most people have a shared idea of fairness, despite what most sensationalists would have us believe. We might mostly agree that fairness can be defined as helping the innocent. But where we differ greatly in our human minds is (1) defining who the innocent are, and (2) how best to help them.

Defining the innocent: Person A may define the innocent by symbolism, or outward characteristics, such as clothing, appearance, or the words that the defined person uses. Yes, words are but symbols. They are meaningless unless backed up by action. Defining innocence by symbolism involves a higher degree of assumption that a person is innocent based on irrelevant factors, such as assuming the person is innocent of stealing jewelry from a home yesterday because he is wearing a suit and tie today and does not now appear to look like a robber. Person B may define the innocent based on their individual actions, including to what degree an individual has a history of offensive behavior.

How to help the innocent: Person A may view the innocent as mostly helpless and in need of being given resources directly because they cannot get these resources themselves, whether they are children or adults. Person B tends to view the innocent differently if they are children or adults. The adults might bear some responsibility for helping themselves, depending on the individual circumstances.

Logic and Relevance: Person A tends to judge in terms of “collective” persons or circumstances, more often assuming that two people in the same symbolic group have very similar experiences and tendencies.

Person B tends to judge in terms of “individual” persons or circumstances, making less assumption by irrelevant factors such as whether a suit was worn the next day by a suspect, and focusing instead on logically relevant factors such as an acquaintance of the suspect hearing him brag the day before, about taking something away from a person.

Both person A and person B may feel guilt from violating their own sense of fairness and innocence. However, since their definitions of fairness are different, there will be disagreement. I think it would be an interesting psychological/sociological study to assess which of these viewpoints, A or B, prevailed in various types of societies in history and in present day. Of course, the study could very well include a large amount of experimenter bias, depending on how the scientists themselves define fairness. (5/12/21)

Tough love vs Soft love

Do not rob your children of self-preparedness by frequently bailing them out.

No Easy Definition

People can speak so eloquently against the existence of an unfair thing, not realizing there were eloquent speeches years ago about the unfair lack of that same existing thing. Or vice versa. So the degree of a thing is perceived as unfair, and at different times.

For example, "totally free speech" is drastically limited in some corners of the world, and the people there desperately want it. In other places where "totally free speech" exists, it becomes taken-for-granted over time. Then, people start chipping away at it by creating exceptions, attempting to create a sculpture of an unknown shape, until all that is left is a pile of chips on the floor. After this of course the cycle continues.

Defining a Good Person

One basic way to define who is a good and fair person is whether they aspire to defend the innocent, and also that their definition of innocence is not based on prejudice, selfishness, or short-sightedness. Of course, these things in turn are a matter of opinion, but are more accurately arrived at through the lens of history: “..deliver them from the hand of the wicked.” (Psalms 82:4)

Extremes

From the time we get up to the time we go to bed, we make millions of decisions, some tiny and some huge. But

in all these decisions, we are trying to avoid extremes. We know this is common sense and can all agree on it. But the underrated and unspoken truth is that we often disagree on what is extreme.

Equal

See yourself as neither superior nor inferior, but as deserving of equal rights and treatment, so that you may help others in the most effective way possible.

Fairness and Guilt

There are at least several different mindsets for success. And at least several types of success.

One mindset is the psychotic, who has no concern with being fair to others, so if intelligent, he often fools people.

Another is a guilt feeler who is eventually able to release it and move forward knowing that the more you have received, the more good you can do. However, the guilt-feeler's heart, which believes equality is fairness, can sabotage the head's efforts, in order to keep the self from being better than others.

So the heart must feel the truth, that people are not equal, and the more the self succeeds the more it can help others. People deserve equal rights, but they are not equal.

Light bulb phrases: Equal rights, not equality, is fair. Equality and diversity are characteristics, not rights. Equality is not a right; equal rights are a right. Equality is not a right, otherwise we'd all be the same height.

Depends

Some people are more logic based, others more emotion based. And their definition of fairness also depends on this as well.

Biblical Heart

I notice that when my heart feels a passionate adherence to Christian values, which are in turn given to us in the Bible, it feels fair. Let's look at why this may be.

The heart can run on different fuels. Instead of running on "thrill", the heart can run on "being Biblical" which is more of a satisfaction than a thrill, but a strong fuel nonetheless.

On this, one point of caution is that the heart seems to slip into conflating things. So the head must be vigilant to see that "thrill" and "Biblical" do not become conflated by the heart.

When the head and heart are not in sync, the heart goes all over the map. The heart may feel superior to others, then feel guilty for doing this, and then feel inferior to others. This roller coaster is a type of thrill cycle in itself. Yes, the heart can run on negative thrill as well as positive. To stop the "superiority-inferiority thrill cycle", the heart must come to know that if it stops grasping at feeling superior, which is an unfair thing, it can then be fueled by being more Biblical than it was previously, feeling that this righteousness comes from God and not self, and of course, with the greatest emphasis on not conflating these two, either.

So, would my goal be to have a passion for fighting selfishness? This seems like two passions in the heart would be fighting each other. The real goal should be a passion for surrendering to God, which is God-centered, not self-centered, as the "fighting selfishness" approach would be.

Help the Innocent

At one of the most basic levels, my heart desires fairness. The head provides a definition of fairness: To help the innocent. (Helping the innocent also includes protecting the innocent; in other words, helping them be safe and secure.)

So the heart should be able to really have a passion for helping the innocent because it's fair. Help the innocent in everything you do because even the little decisions can add up to a great impact. I will stumble along the way as I attempt to help the innocent, across the rocky ground, but this is better than sitting still! Also, this is other-centered, which works better than self-centered.

Now, humans will not be perfect at helping the innocent. One example: Roaches are innocent creatures simply trying to find food. Yet we put out poison for them. It turns out that roaches unknowingly spread disease to humans. So we are constantly re-defining who the most innocent are.

But also we define the best way to help the innocent. One example is the old saying which involves a person

who has nothing to eat: Should you continue to give him a fish every day, which is faster and simpler but keeps him dependent on you, or should you teach him to fish? If you teach him, he not only feels a greater sense of independence but it will free up your resources to be used in other, more helpful ways.

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The 50 Year 180

My idea of fairness has changed in some ways as the decades have gone by, as the difference between the long-term big picture and the short-term small picture becomes ever sharper in focus.

Surveys show that people tend to become more risk-averse as they get older. As a teenager, I recall seeing stubborn old men on the news and thinking they were holding back progress by indicating that certain things should never change.

I had 16 years experience in the world then, and 66 now. Now I can see more clearly how much is too much, and how little is too little. With that hindsight, it looks to me like humans would progress faster by going a little slower, taking longer to consider our chess moves, so there would not be as many setbacks.

Populations in some areas of the world today have not experienced much grave adversity in decades – "grave adversity" meaning that starvation, violence, and lack of shelter, or at least the serious dread of these calamities becoming imminent, is widespread.

Not only does the mind wander into superficialities without sufficient adversity to keep it grounded, but when enough people do this over the years, decadence rises as our core moral basics rust and gather dust.

In hindsight it appears that 50 years ago, what used to be the moral middle-ground was perceived by some of the up-and-comers (including your truly) as “stodginess”. Now, the current crop of up-and-comers has torn that label off and slapped the label “authoritarian” on it. The so-called authoritarians (of which now I seem to find myself a member) stand accused of promoting excessive traditional rule-following, and ironically, now face an actual authoritarian judgment themselves.

It appears that I have become one of the aforementioned stubborn old men. And even though my adjustments to the rudder are sometimes inaccurate, the orbital view now attained after 5 decades of observation shows that I am generally headed on the right course, although unfortunately, the armada is not with me. (1/31/24)

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End of Topic: Fairness

Genders

Dating

In hindsight, it appears to me that in their 20's, many women figuratively walk down Stable Provider Street, looking off to the right and to the left, looking for a place they can dwell and feel secure. When the man sets up his house on Stable Provider Street, he should have "Hold On Loosely" playing on his sound system. He cannot be desperate, or she will not linger in a conversation with him. She also may leave if he becomes desperate later on. But he also cannot be too overconfident or cocky, because this will attract a woman who is a power player. So he must maintain a certain balance, which comes from a certain mindset.

I wrote a lyric once that goes, "As long as I am self-assured she'll come to me one day somehow". And in turn, this self-assuredness should come from knowing that God protects your soul forever. Part of the man's stable mindset is to have a purpose, which is making effort to be a good clean helper, although knowing he won't be perfect but still making effort, calmly using the Bible as an instruction manual.

And he can't feel that his imperfections disqualify him from a relationship, for otherwise, Jesus sacrificed Himself for nothing. The man's internal self-judge should not hand down a guilty verdict with a sentence of self-sabotage, because of a magnifying glass view of his imperfections.

Instead, this judge should issue a restraining order on self-destructive behaviors. This allows the man to move forward and help others even better, being vigilant to restrain the self-destructive behaviors as a way of helping others, providing others with a good helper, fighting for fairness, including when selfish people try to take his honestly earned resources from him, which would ultimately let down those he intends to provide for.

Yes, God says that we must give up extreme guilt as we have given up other extreme child-like thoughts, such as magical thinking. Guilt should not be a sentence of staying off the track, but instead should be a temporary reminder to get back on track, with a passion for vigilance and helping others, while on track.

As the woman walks down Stable Provider Street, the man may stand on his front porch with a friendly smile and his door open. If she walks on past, if he is secure, he will continue to smile, knowing he has a purpose even without her. Sometimes, a woman may look back to see if he is still smiling and appears stable and comfortable in his purpose, then she may turn around and decide to join him in a long conversation (sort of like the lyrics to the song “Pretty Woman”).

Gender Tendencies

I believe brain research will continue to show that the average female prioritizes words and emotion over the laws of physics, where in the average male it is the other way around. Of course there are exceptions, & each person sits at a unique point in this continuum, which is why I say "average".

God made us this way and we must make efforts to balance both of these views. I think one way to measure this balance would be to survey the overall safety, security, and happiness of the population. However, in today’s political climate, a group of psychologists attempting to measure it in a study would likely introduce their own bias into the definitions and possibly reach the wrong conclusion. So a careful reading of the entire study would be prudent, before accepting the results.

Culture balance

Cultures should strive for balance between the typical male and female mindsets. Women are mostly the sought after while men are mostly the seekers. Choosing the right man is generally how females pass their genes on. Figuring out how to be that chosen one, is generally how men pass their genes on.

Most women and men have these views hard wired into their brains. However, a society attempting to conquer others without any consideration, is a society where the male mindset over-dominates. A society prone to surrender which in turn leads to its undoing, is a society where the female mindset over-dominates. Alas, the balance between the two often eludes us since we are not as wise as we think. We will continue to fluctuate from one to the other as history unfolds.

Ruinous compassion

Obviously, Helping Too Little is a frequently discussed problem, often attributed to a typical male mindset. But Helping Too Much receives disproportionally little attention. One example of The Irony of Helping Too Much is the age-old dilemma of a mothering instinct gone wild, that in some parents goes beyond its original noble function and so continues on into pathological Enabling and false sense of Entitlement as the child grows older, thus robbing children of developing their problem-solving skills.

Misinterpretation

In today’s culture in America, men are still not perfect, but are more misunderstood than we used to be. At 63, I have been watching this trend for the past 50 years. (2021)

Word Bonding

Pursuant to the field of behavioral genetics, I have to offer a hypothesis based on decades of observations, that women emphasize social bonding with a greater quantity of words and greater time spent using words. More often, women are verbal artisans although there are notable exceptions to this in both men and women. I would be intrigued if someone were to write a book on how this might play into the political climate as societies change.

Genders

As a curious side note, working in health care, I have observed that women more than men have a predisposition to want to list the things that someone ate and the type and quantity of the food, while men rarely do this.

Sharpening the Saw

Despite what the social police say, I think surveys would reveal that many women want to be provided for, by men. Most women have historically had the desire to raise children, which required such enormous resources that these women did not have the time to go out and work. Their more-than-full-time job was in the home.

But the degree to which women feel this need for a provider, vs. the reality of how much the man is able to provide, may create conflict. This may sound obvious, but I think there is an epigenetic mechanism in many women that tends to push men to do more, and women may even verbally spar with men to keep them sharp.

I think this is usually from the subconscious, but it often works, as long as it is not overdone. However, the definition of "overdone" must be subconsciously agreed upon by the man and woman, as a line they must not cross, in order for it to work for them long term.

Communication

Guys, if a man is to be happy with a woman, he must love her, and he must sometimes take what she says with a grain of salt. (And I'm sure they say the same thing about us.) But this works only thru forgiveness, not disdain.

Short-term and Long-term Balance

Despite the blurry definitions that some researchers use, my personal experience over 63 years tells me that short term thought is primarily the domain of women, and long-term thought, mostly men. Humans must have both, because we live in both the short and long term. And if our lives are destined to be cut short, most of us still care about children and grandchildren who, compared to us, will live into the long term. So, the long and short term ideas we have, should be in balance and agreement. Societies advance where compromise allows these competing ideas to build bridges. But they will sometimes be at odds because often, the long-term advantage is a short-term disadvantage, and vice versa.

There are examples of researchers misinterpreting long term vs. short term thought. I have seen a so-called scholarly article explain that men are more focused on the short run because they often take on more risk, which is a less safe mode of action, which in turn means they will be less likely to survive or be healthy or have financial security in the long term.

These researchers are focused on the small picture at the individual level. Men more often take on risk, which is perilous in the short run but if they survive, it's an advantage long run for others because of the knowledge gained and spread to children, about how to survive in certain situations.

Even in animals where knowledge and memory are limited, males take on greater risk to save the lives of females, as well as other males, which promotes the greater likelihood that the species will survive in the long run. (2021)

Time and Words

One thing I have noticed since our society has become "over-feminized" in my opinion, is that word-bonding has become a social requirement, and even polite avoidance of this extended number of words, for the purpose of getting things done faster, is seen as rude.

I'm sure someone could find an article worded such that my opinion is wrong in some way here, but if there's one thing I have learned in 63 years, it is that often, the so-called experts have a lot more watts in their sound system than the actual experts. (2021)

Relationships

Keeping in mind that often times opposites attract, there is a limit to this. Respect is an area where similars may attract, but only if both do not tolerate disrespect.

Communication

Keeping in mind that some men use ugly communication as a weapon against women, it must be remembered that some women do the same against men. Much has been written about this ugly male communication, especially as portrayed in entertainment dramas. But it seems to me that disproportionally little has been written about the ugly female communication used against men. So I write this, in an effort to achieve a little balance:

Is it just me or is the new hi-octane feminism using some sneaky word games in everyday language with males? Men are often painted as either idiot or arrogant. The purpose of this is often SCA (Strategic Character Assassination). Guys, have you ever been grossly misinterpreted, and feel like sometimes all you can do is lower your head and wait for the verbal blows to come? Take heart and read on.

One game people (often women) play, could be called "The Worst Assumption Technique". This is where the woman assumes the guy meant something in the dumbest way possible, and then she replies to it, as if he actually meant it that way. Thus, he is painted as the idiot.

The male must be quick to respond politely: "Well no, my meaning was…" If he responds even with a hint of displeasure, he can easily be painted as the typical domineering male (arrogant). If his explanation is both precise and polite, the whole thing backfires on her, unless she is more verbally talented than the male, which sadly, is often the case between men and women.

Another, but less common, game is "The Continuous Nudging Technique" where the woman is so overly intrusive with niceties, it baits the male into requesting a halt to it, thus painting him as arrogant. The male would be wise simply to smile and not take the bait in this situation. Any request to stop it will be used to paint him as an arrogant patriarchal patronizing feeling-hurter. And if he suspects he is a victim of this game but the perpetrator is just stealthy enough to fly under the radar, he might describe it to another guy as "That's just beyond happenstance." I think this is why Harrison Ford once indicated he just nods his head during conversations with his wife.

Be ready guys! Society works best when there is a balance between male and female influence. If we can't agree on what that balance is, look to history. There's usually some common historical ground there for most people.

Yet Another Irony

One of the great ironies of life is that in order to find the love of your life, you must first be emotionally secure enough to live without the love of your life. (5/23/22)

End of Chapter - Genders

GENETICS

Character

Content of character is not in the skin. This is of course based on the famous quote by Martin Luther King, Jr.. Hopefully my re-wording here may simply be a conversational way of causing the light bulb to come on in the listener's mind. It could also be said that "Content of character is not in the genitals" or "not in unrelated brain pathways."

While I do believe that genes have influence on personality and character, they are not the total influence. Many people of all races and genders make great effort to overcome their negative tendencies, and some people of all races and genders do not make much effort. Those who make a greater effort do exhibit a great positive character.

Come to know your own tendencies well, positive or negative, so you can also know well what to focus on while moving forward.

Annihilation

The film "Annihilation" (2018) appears to be a statement about genetics, specifically how we define a sustainable order versus the cancer of unsustainable disorder, no matter how ugly or beautiful that defined disorder may initially appear to us, and that a larger definition of sustainable order could change, annihilating the products of the previous order.

Dominance and Submission

Some see unfairness in the world and think, "If you can't beat 'em, join 'em." There are others who see the same thing, and say, "If you can't beat 'em, find another way." The root of these two attitudes may be that there are at least two ways to pass along your genes, developed during thousands of years of pre-historic tribal wars: Win the war against the invading tribe and keep them out of your gene pool, or submit to them and mix both gene pools.

Offshoot

It might occur that in the spirit of the Human Genome Project, someone should start a Human Social Genome Project. But this has already begun under the umbrella of Behavioral Genetics.

Hormones
1. Do not be an adrenaline junkie, oxytocin beats it.
2. Too much testosterone is like too much alcohol.

Selfishness

Why are we made so that we often have to reject our selfish impulses? Maybe these strong impulses were bred into us over thousands of years, so that in times of starvation and other dire threats, we would use them to survive.

Selfishness is probably a strong part of our survival instinct, which kicks in when we perceive various threats. However, since primitive times, the definition of "threat" has changed in some ways, so our threat-perception itself is often inaccurate, but the selfishness kicks in, anyway. Some genes have just not caught up to this change in our environment.

Beauty

I believe our minds are made so that some things appear beautiful to us, as opposed to the idea that things are created as beautiful. We are born with slates, but they are not totally blank. What's written on them at birth, varies from one person to the next. But there's still some flexibility, depending on what else gets written on them over the years.

High vs. Low Stress Threshold

Flipping point: The point at which a significant percentage of the population decides enough is enough. An epigenetic component is likely in this process.

Cohesion

Many people are conscientious (they have a conscience) to different degrees, and this is a most underrated brain function. Studies show conscientiousness has a genetic component, and can vary based on experience. When present in individuals, conscientiousness allows a team of these individuals to increase its numbers based on affinity, not fear. Affinity is a stronger cement. Of course, affinity can be a good thing, but not always.
(Substack **3/27/23** with slight edit 12/26/25)

Downfall and Rise of Civilizations: A Genetically Driven Cycle

When a society battles adversity, gradually becoming strong, developing a dominant military, and its population feels safer, that society has transformed from an underdog to an overdog. Eventually however, increasing numbers of them gradually become overconfident, resulting in laziness of all sorts, including letting their guard down, yet seemingly unaware this is happening.

This deterioration may be an epigenetic process that tells the individual "Look around. When general safety looks like it will continue, take a break from the unsustainable levels of adrenaline and cortisol. Don't worry so much." Taking a break from these unsustainable levels is needed, but the problem comes when the break is overdone.

One sign it's getting overdone is when people increasingly underestimate any opposition. They might do this because opposition appears small to them. You hear comments like "Oh that'll never happen." But opposition might appear small when hiding its secret desires for rebellion.

Over the decades I've seen several examples of groups who want to rebel (underdogs), yet they keep their heads low and opinions muffled until they feel (a) there's enough of them to cause a tipping point, and (b) major society has become overconfident and lazy enough that they can rebel effectively.

People within these rebel underdog groups yearn for this tipping point and can feel, through contact with others, when this point is reached, an epigenetically influenced group awareness, I believe.

Many of us are born with a sense that calls us to "pull for the underdog", a feeling that there is an inherent "Righteousness of the Underdog." We need to watch this because they are not always righteous. Nonetheless, it's a strong feeling, and a natural reaction because an underdog experiences greater adversity, and as genetics shows us, adversity (if not overdone) builds strength, whether that strength be right or wrong.

The Youth Accelerant: An additional factor in the mix is this - no matter what a society's situation looks like, weak or strong, prosperous or poor, fair or unfair, there is also the genetic tendency for many of the youth to rebel against parental guidance for a period of time. This "rebellious youth tendency" is always there, waiting for that "tipping point sense" in themselves or in some other perceived underdog group within the major society that they can latch on to, root for, to give them an actual cause to match their rebellious tendency.

So if any underdog group in a larger society wants to throw some accelerant onto their movement and have it catch fire, they just need to figure out a way to grab the youth & get them onboard. Once this is done, in the anger flash of the hormonal gritting of teeth by younger generations, any previous generational sins are dug up and amplified, and the baby is deemed to be worth no more than the bathwater.

Again, any underdog group (and the youth that might have joined with them) may be righteous or not. Either way, they feel they are.

Infused now with youth, underdog rebels feel that the type of strength and discipline taught by older generations is itself is a great burden of unfairness that must be brought tumbling down. This may be right or wrong. Both the righteous and the unrighteous have been guilty of falling into laziness and overconfidence, allowing righteous or unrighteous underdog groups to rise and challenge them.

A **righteous major society** may become lazy & overconfident, but still hold righteous beliefs. This is one situation where the old saying "The road to hell is paved with good intentions" applies.

In this case, an unrighteous underdog will fight those moral ideas that gave strength to previous generations, instead of fighting the overconfidence and laziness that befell them later on. Disproportion rules: They fight molehills and call them mountains, while ignoring the mountains as molehills. They dig up sins from the past which have been largely eliminated, excusing and ignoring the larger problems in the present. Most of these unrighteous underdog fighters have not lived longer than 4 decades, and have not seen clearly first hand, the way things came to gradually change. The older unrighteous underdog fighters are riding the backs of the young, deceiving them while in the midst of their own continuing quest for power.

So, deception is a major indicator of an unrighteous group. Any righteous group should have enough eloquent and accurate historians and other truth-tellers to counterbalance the onslaught of the unrighteous propaganda. If not, all could be lost.

The other side of the coin is where an **unrighteous major society** becomes overconfident and lazy. For an example of this, I would simply raise the example of the American Revolution in 1776, where the righteous underdogs on the American continent broke away from Great Britain.

History is full of civilizational rises and falls. Overconfidence seems to be the first domino to take part in the fall, with intellectual laziness next, leading to the fall of the rest. This process can take a few years or hundreds of years, depending on the degree of overconfidence present at various points in time.

When an underdog topples or takes over a civilization, it is no longer the underdog. It has become the major society itself. And it did not get there by being overconfident.

Thus the cycle is complete. The goal of the cycle was the return of adversity in order to reduce overconfidence and rebuild strength in some place with some population, and it worked as planned, even though most of the participants had no idea of the natural workings of this age-old "renewal" cycle. It is as though the population in decline was a pregnant mother who went through excruciating pain and gave birth to the new, dominant society.

This renewal cycle works to reduce overconfidence in major society, whether a rebellion is righteous or unrighteous, whether the rebels take over, or serve only to awaken major society to its overconfidence, just in time to put down the rebellion.

If most of a society's population are long-term thinkers, there is less chance the overconfidence and laziness will take hold as quickly. And what is a major danger sign that a society's long-term thought is on the way out the door? I submit to you that it is excessive debt.

Today, unprecedented borrowing of money, especially in government, has given us this awful gift: a false sense of security by removing the natural adversities that would have occurred without borrowing, which lulls and pulls us into chronic, pathogenic, and possibly even malignant, overconfidence. (12/27/25)

Dumbing Down

In their quest for power, The Selfish attempt to disarm the public of its own power: knowledge. The dumbing

down of the public takes on many forms, but one is the restriction of communication that someone else just plain doesn't like. Conversely, it is difficult to restrict free communication in a population that respects the right of others to respectfully disagree. The Selfish then must get the population to lose respect for splintered segments within itself, by promoting undue discord. This is easy when there is no unifying outside cause to fight against.

Givers & Needers

I have a theory that there are *at least* 2 types of givers, and 2 types of needers.

Needer type 1: makes effort to try to improve their situation, and reluctantly accepts help.

Needer type 2: does not appear to make effort to improve their situation, and feels they deserve unlimited help. I have heard it said, "They buy what they want, and then beg for what they need".

Giver type 1: Prefers to give targeted help to someone who seems likely to make effort to improve their own situation. This Giver does not need recognition, and may decide to be anonymous. I think there are very few of these Givers who happen to have a good bit of money and/or power.

Giver type 2: Prefers to give targeted help to someone who seems likely to be outwardly thankful to the giver. I think the majority of these Givers happen to have a good bit of money and/or power.

Further, I think the type 1's vote similarly, and the type 2's vote similarly, with the type 2 Givers more often being employed in government. I think this because the stronger and more continuing needs of the type 2 Needers, fuels the desires of the type 2 Givers. And of course the type 2 Needers complete the circle by voting for the type 2 Givers. But even when the type 2 Giver is not a politician, he receives an inward satisfaction that the type 2 Needer, really needs him.

I placed this under the heading of Behavioral Genetics because I believe these tendencies have a strong genetic component.

Long-Term vs Short-Term thinkers

Behavioral genetics reveals that some basic personality tendencies have a strong genetic component. Some of these are openness, agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, neuroticism, among others. Considering the differences between people who tend to be long-term thinkers vs short-term thinkers, I have a theory that the short-term thinkers also tend to vote certain ways, and they tend to be more verbal. I think when they are speaking, they also tend to embellish, stretch, or even create "facts" and to use a more emotional tone. In short, they are highly talented in the art of wordsmithing. These are things I have just noticed through the years, but I think a properly completed study would show this to be the case. However, given the lack of Thought Diversity in the Universities, where most of this research takes place, I would be skeptical of the results.

Less Thought Variability?

Sometimes, people are credited with more conscious effort than they really give. For example, a person who is genetically gifted with exceptional eye-hand coordination, might become a successful race car driver. It might be assumed that he worked very hard at it, even though much of his talent may have been present regardless of any hard practice.

Also I have a theory that short-term thinkers are mistakenly credited with sticking with each other and persevering in the long run, to accomplish their societal goals. But I think they don't have as much variance in their thought patterns as the long-term thinkers, who consider a wider range of possible scenarios. Thus it only appears that the short-term thinkers are putting aside petty differences to work with each other, when actually there is just more thought-similarity among them. This has huge implications when you have a one-vote-per-person system: The short-term thinkers will win more often, since they more often vote as a block on issues.

Father Roles, Child-Like Thinking

Some people are apparently wired from birth to be highly disappointed with anyone who uses tough love, discipline, or encourages any truly effective degree of self-reliance, so they are more likely to remain child-like thinkers and are also less likely to appreciate their fathers. Having said that, people can change dramatically in their thinking over a period of years, but I believe this change does not happen relatively often in a population.

Behavioral Genetics and God

All groups are not the same in IQ or EQ, which are shown to have genetic as well as learned components, but this by no means allows us to assign a total value to a human being. Only God can do this. Anyone who feels superior because of their IQ or EQ, pretends to assume the role of God, which is a sin for us to assume.

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When The Boss Lets People Off the Hook

There is a psychological phenomenon I call "Benevolent Bestower" syndrome. I first experienced this years ago as a manager, when I was supposed to "write up" any employee who didn't perform properly. I dutifully did so, but then my boss would let the employee off the hook, while smiling and telling the employee, "You know not to do that again."

The result of course is that the offender learns that it's quite acceptable to do it again. And of course then the good employees think "I guess I can do that too." But why would a boss do this? Because there is a feeling of power or at least some kind of satisfaction, or dopamine rush. And the degree to which each person feels and desires their own dopamine rush is often 50% governed by their genetics.

I believe this occurs in some people once they get into positions of power. They no longer get their dopamine from having to fight for their security as a front-line employee, so they instead get it from being the overly-lenient "Benevolent Bestower." I think some people in government also get this syndrome, indicating that people are people, whether they work for corporations or for government.
There are always bad apples. The "Benevolent Bestower" looks like a good apple but has a big worm in it.

A related concept is what I call "Court-Phobia." This is where bosses are afraid of getting sucked into court, possibly for firing an unproductive person who can then put up a claim, whether true or false. And false claims cost a lot to defend, not to mention any bad media coverage that spreads like wildfire before the claim is even found to be false.

So even if a boss is not a "Benevolent Bestower" himself, he might be afflicted with a severe case of Court-Phobia. Either way, unproductive employees stay on, much to the chagrin of the productive ones, who eventually become unproductive themselves or leave. That's now the prevailing incentive, whether intentional, or an unintended consequence. So naturally it snowballs into "jackpot justice," where people try to get fired if they think they can win in court.

Bosses across the land in recent decades are developing Court-Phobia at an alarming rate, leading to the painfully sharp decline in quality of products and services that everyone is experiencing now. We do need the court system for valid claims, but why has Court-Phobia exploded so disproportionately after 230 years?

"Benevolent Bestower" syndrome is increasing in the court system itself, including juries who suddenly find themselves in positions of power they never before experienced, and may never again once they are off the jury. This is their chance to help the little guy fight the corporate giant. Whether the little guy is right or wrong, doesn't seem to matter much anymore. Jurors want their dopamine rush regardless.

Despite this, our court system itself is not the problem. The system is being misused like never before. What many people don't realize is that judges have great sway in what the jury is able to hear, and therefore what they decide. Judges who are afflicted with "Benevolent Bestower" syndrome can get their dopamine power hits the same way the jury does, only year after year.

What can be done about all this? Many judges must be voted into office. Voters are less and less aware of how overly-lenient some courts are, and less aware of how this over-leniency can come back around and bite the

voters themselves on that rounded protuberance upon which they sit. And they are more likely to be bitten while they're sittin'. They need to mentally get up off it and find out what's really going on. **(5/24/24)** (Substack 9-5-24) (Minor edits 12/28/25)

Part 2: When the Boss Lets People Off the Hook

Part 1 dealt with bosses being too lenient – overdoing the leniency. Anything a human being does can be overdone, underdone, or done just about right.

You made an honest mistake at work, the boss let you off the hook. The mistake wasn't critical, didn't cause much of a problem. You don't have a pattern of making many mistakes. Other people occasionally make honest mistakes like yours, and they get let off the hook. This is leniency done just about right.

Underdone leniency is when no one gets let off the hook. It's the same as overdone strictness. It requires a degree of near-perfection that no employee can meet. The boss would end up firing everyone, and would then be out of a job himself. For that reason, overdone strictness (underdone leniency) is rarely a widespread problem in a company.

However, if the boss has some ulterior motive, say, he wants to move his cousin into John Smith's position, then John Smith may be held to a degree of near-perfection that he cannot meet.

The courts can rightfully handle this type of situation, provided John Smith documented everything that happened to him, especially if he has friends at work who can testify to the double standard. But sometimes even friends are fearful of losing their own jobs for testifying. This is why I think brave whistleblowers are right on up there with other heroes.

There's another factor – unequal distribution of power-tripping. In other words, some companies have more than their share of power-trippers, while other companies have less than their share. If John Smith is surrounded by power-trippers, a number of people may testify against him, to curry favor with the boss.

Underdone and overdone leniency are both problems but from a 30,000 foot view, I think the overdone variety is worse for a society in the long run. In the past, a company with systemically overdone leniency would continue to employ careless staff, who provide substandard services to the point of going out of business. Customers would then go elsewhere. The problem solved itself.

But today, court-phobia is an epidemic, leading to retention of unproductive employees. Anyone over 30 has seen the reliability of many services plummet in just the last decade. When most businesses are substandard, customers have hardly anywhere else to go. Then, they come to expect and accept the new substandard normal, and they get what they pay for.

However, there are still some customers out there who exercise the extra effort to seek out reliably good companies to do business with. In a nutshell: The free-market is like a muscle - use it or lose it.

(11-1-24) (Substack.com 11-1-24) (Minor but important edits **12/28/25**)

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Dating

There is a documentary on Han Brunner's "Warrior Gene". And at this time there is a company that for $99, offers to test you and tell you if you have this gene. As we know, many other genes interact to produce behavior. Still, if I were a young man today looking to get married, I would try to find out about as many of my

girlfriend's genes as I could. So, I think this will be the next billion-dollar business. But more importantly, it allows people to make more informed decisions, something the free market depends on. (2016)

Culture, Trust

People can be experts in some areas, and idiots in others. The more we try to work with more people, the larger network of experts we have to draw from, provided however, that those others are like us and willing to acknowledge the expertise of others, and trust and be trustworthy so as to gain the advantage of a *larger pool* of brain power, and not to have individuals re-inventing the wheel all over the place because everyone's afraid their idea will be stolen.

This is where the selfish impulse becomes a disadvantage, and second guessing this impulse becomes an advantage. However, if others are not like us, and are not able to see that the end result is worth the risk of trust, they will purposely fool the trusting people around them.

Eventually, those who are taken advantage of, will wake up and attempt to congregate with others in their same situation, and exclude the untrustworthy. That is, if they are smart enough to do so, and don't have some subtype of Stockholm Syndrome going on in their minds. I suspect this has occurred millions of times in groups of humans over countless years, and has become embedded in the behavioral genetics of some groups more so than others.

The key words here are "larger pool". Like a Venn diagram, people in different groups have characteristics that overlap, but there are still some general tendencies of one group, that exceed the general tendencies of another. For example, some groups contain a higher percentage of trusting individuals, which is an advantage when the people they interact with are trustworthy. Of course it is a disadvantage when they interact with the untrustworthy. (2017)

Altruism, Gender

Jesus set a great example of altruism. With regard to our success as a species, altruism was and is essential, in some individuals but not all. It is a genetic trait which evolved through what Michael Woodley calls Group Selection. Everyone can't be a leader, and everyone can't be an altruist either, for societal success. There seems to be an Optimum Distribution of these and many other traits that leads to a successful society. Hopefully one day a group of geneticists will undertake the task of defining this Optimum Distribution.

Also, since men live 5 years less on average than women, there is the idea that men should get Medicare and social security 5 years before women. Could you imagine the outcry if the situation were reverse? Men have not spoken up for this I believe because we more often exhibit altruism. The individual with the altruism gene is more likely to take a stand on principle in a dangerous situation, and thus more likely get killed at some point, before mating. But over millennia, the groups who had a higher percentage of altruism genes in their individuals, survived better.

Of course altruism by itself is not necessarily noble. Principles need to be virtuous. But today in the U.S., unprecedented financial borrowing is at all-time highs, especially with the national debt. So, many "poor nation" adversities (such as widespread starvation) have been pushed down the road for future generations to deal with the cost of avoiding such a calamity. This complicates the picture for the average citizen, and makes it more difficult for enough citizens to agree on the definition of "virtuous principle".

There are just not enough big picture altruistic thinkers in most populations. Thus, we are doomed until the proper adversity comes along that causes the small picture altruistic thinkers to awaken into the big picture. Such is the stuff of epigenetics. Or, sufficient adversity could arise, resulting in no one left standing except for those who are already big picture altruistic thinkers. Such is the stuff of classic genetics. (2020)

Contradiction, Predispositions

We have pre-wired in our brains to a certain degree, natural attractions and natural aversions. These differ from person to person. However, sometimes we think others should be able to change their naturally wired tendencies, while we should not. The conversation might go like this:

I accept your reality as a reality. But I have a natural aversion to it, the same as you have a natural attraction to it. If you believe people have inborn feelings that should be respected, as long as they are not hurting anyone, it would be hypocritical to say this applies to attractions only, and not aversions. Certainly, people can act

selfishly on their feelings, whether aversions or attractions. I condemn any selfish actions by anyone. But to say I should be able to change my natural feeling, is the same as saying you should be able to change your natural feeling. To say that a person with one type of wiring should be able to change their natural feeling and a person with another type of wiring should not, is a contradiction.

I could put it another way: People have different inborn predispositions. Additionally, some have greater inborn difficulty dealing with them, and/or greater difficulty dealing with the inborn predispositions of others. Since the human mind has a degree of flexibility, we may reduce these difficulties with conscious efforts, but this even has its inborn limits.

All this is to say, that we cannot tell how much effort another person is putting into dealing with various predispositions, so we should not be too quick to immediately accuse them of any mental laziness. Rather, any laziness will usually make itself known through conversations over time.

The big picture conclusion is this: Love is a spiritual matter, and can transcend many of these feelings and predispositions, although it is often easier said than done, while we inhabit these human forms. But what matters is the effort a person makes, to understand and show spiritual love to others, while only God really knows the depth and height of the efforts we make.

Evolution, Society, History

Human society needs to progress, but should each society go out on a limb faster than the DNA tree grows, breaking too many limbs and setting the tree back every time? Or should we look to history for what constitutes a safe limb before we venture out onto it?

Voting and Culture

The majority of U.S. voters are demanding some very different things from government than they used to demand even 10 years ago. Also, the average genetic as well as cultural background of the average U.S. voter has changed in an accelerated manner, compared to even 10 years ago. So we have 3 variables here: Voting, Genetics, and Culture.

Voting decisions and culture are cognitive functions of the brain, and behavioral genetics shows us that cognitive decisions are guided in part by our genes. I say “in part” because scientists who work in the field of behavioral genetics will be the first to tell you that our life experiences change our thoughts, even though our genes do not change.

But there are gene-based limits and tendencies to these thought-changes. Behavioral genetics seeks to tease apart the nature from the nurture, which have been lumped in together for thousands of years, because there was no knowledge of genes affecting brain function. Of course, people throughout history have observed certain general patterns with regard to mental functions and families. But this was blurry and lent itself to many gross misassumptions. This lumping-in has caused uncountable and yet likely underestimated instances of strife and death in human history. Therefore, the science of Behavioral Genetics is like the science of Nuclear Physics, another double-edged sword which has the potential for a great supply of virtuous productivity on the one hand, but if misused, a great potential for calamity on the other. (2021)

God and Genetics

As God has designed it, the environment we live in is a genetic proving ground, among other things.

Generations, Independence

Just from watching myself in my teens and 20’s, and my sons in their teens and 20’s, it seems there may be an epigenetic mechanism that is subconscious in the young, that seeks to doubt and disagree with much of what parents say, as a way of sending parents the message that it is time now for the young to try to fly on their own, make their own way using their own ideas. This Independence Mechanism must be exercised, like a pair of wings, otherwise the independence is crippled. Parents should learn to see this so they can stop making so many suggestions that it alienates or otherwise inhibits the natural mental growth of their adult children. (7/2/20)

Submission

Different groups have genetically adapted to the same problem in different ways. Different species of birds

have developed different color schemes for example, due to the same problem: predators.

With humans I have come to believe that in ancient times, some gene pools may have survived due to the vast majority of them being fierce warriors and fighting off the invaders. Others I believe, adapted by producing a certain percentage of submitters who, if the warriors were unsuccessful, submitted readily to the invaders' culture, and passed their genes along that way. Also I think there are many in the middle who could go either way, depending on how they perceive the situation, which is an example of epigenetics.

One example of the submitter mentality is Stockholm syndrome. I have a theory that submitters have a genetic predisposition for certain mindsets, which causes them to go into media occupations: an infatuation for drama, sensationalism, and trying all sorts of new things as opposed to traditionalism, affinity for discipline, and long-term thought. There are exceptions to this trend, as there are with most trends, but we can't ignore trends just because there are exceptions to them.

With regard to the middle-of-the-roaders whose epigenetics could go either way (warrior or submitter) depending on their perceptions, media today (mostly full of submitters) has become bigger than ever in human history, so it plays a bigger part than ever in the perceptions of these middle-of-the-roaders, causing them to lean toward the submissive mindset.

And by submissive I don't mean they lack strong views. But their strong views are based on which way the trendy wind blows. They prefer the sensational, the exciting, and anything that bucks the long standing, predictable, unswerving, and "boring" path of tradition.

The definitions of "warrior" and "submitter" depend on how different people see God. A warrior may tend to see Him as a leader whose orders must be followed. This could be oversimplified as a type of submission, but most everyone knows that a fighting force needs a hierarchy of some kind to succeed in its fight. I see it as a will to fight for or with someone, as opposed to submission. And I see it as fighting for virtuous principle in the face of another force who would take it away.

Assumptions in Human Nature

There are many underrated and unspoken concepts which we mistakenly ignore in our daily conversations. These are the undiscussed attitudinal whales under the surface, buried Truths that we should stop assuming are untrue. Here are only a few:

We should stop assuming the golden word "sometimes" is unimportant. Actually it provides unparalleled accuracy and common ground when used properly, and prevents arguments, as opposed to using absolute terms such as "always" and "never". Unfortunately it requires an extra step in the thought process that many are unwilling to take.

We should stop assuming people won't take a good thing too far (or not far enough) and turn it into a bad thing.

We should stop assuming that someone must have a solution to the problem in order to believe them when they say there is a problem.

We should stop assuming that people won't rationalize something to fight about when it's not worth fighting about.

We should stop assuming that everyone's fuse is the same and we all have the same rate and weight of anger development.

We should stop assuming that while people are physically different in their bodies, everyone is born with the same blank slate in the mind. The science of Behavioral Genetics gives proof that we are born with different ranges of mental capabilities. What we accomplish inside our own personal ranges, depends on how hard we work in them. We should recognize mindset diversity as we recognize all other kinds of diversity. (Substack 4/15/23)

Worry

Stop worrying how things are going to turn out, and start working on the details. Stop letting the amygdala go overboard, paralyzing you in fear. Tamp the amygdala down from a paralyzing worry, down to a helpful concern. Then let the cortex work on the mechanics of solving the problem.

Service

I compare myself to an ant, who is programmed to help others, yet is unable to comprehend the complexity and entirety of the ant hill. Simply be helpful to others. In fact, sometimes when I dwell on just the desire to be helpful, I feel kind of a warm low tingle in my head for a few seconds. I wonder if it is an oxytocin release, which could be part of the programming.

Stockholm syndrome

Variants of Stockholm syndrome are more widespread in some cultures than we may think. I believe they often involve concepts of self-faulting and guilt, among others, and may require different names as different types are discovered.

This overall mechanism may have ensured human survival in various ways, which would be interesting to explore. My conjecture is that in a population, we have people who are wired to fight the enemy, and those who are wired to submit, or identify with the enemy. In past times of tribal wars, both could assure passage of genes in different ways. If tribe A wins the war, they pass their genes within their own tribe and within the conquered tribe (tribe B). The only way tribe B has now to pass any of its genes is by submitting to mate with tribe A. The most obvious example of this would be a male from tribe A mating with a female from tribe B.

But I think there are ways that a Stockholm syndrome gene could have been passed down in males. In the war, males in tribe B could have thrown themselves on the mercy of tribe A, promising allegiance, even expressing a hate for their own tribe, and possibly even killing a member of their own tribe after switching sides, to prove their allegiance. (As a side note, I think those who were successful at this possibly had a talent for being verbally convincing.) Benedict Arnold was a famous example of this, although there were countless others unknown. Once established in tribe A, the traitor was free to pass his genetic predispositions down to his progeny. I think it is all probably more complicated than this, but still generally true in my opinion.

It appears to me that for some reason, white people have more than their share of Stockholm syndrome. Possibly it was one of the social tools that improved survival in the ancient conditions where white people lived.

The cultures that are now submissive, for whatever reason, will eventually submit to those who are aggressive. The roots of this may be in a genetic long-term group selection which may cause cultures to rise and fall. Carle Zimmerman in “Family and Civilization” (1947), explored the behavioral trends but genetics was in its infancy at the time. It would be interesting to see if there are genetic links to these “rise and fall” trends in civilizations.

Impulsivity, Perception

With regard to the higher incarceration rates of some groups, I can say I am in one of those groups - Males. Is this higher incarceration of males due to prejudice or biological difference? The science of behavioral genetics is unveiling increasing evidence that biology plays a significant role in behaviors such as impulsivity.

Males are usually more prone to physical impulsivity, such as with the well-known fight or flight instinct, when a threat is perceived. So in a row of dominoes, the “level of perceived threat” domino falls first, falling into the “fight or flight” domino.

Threat assessment has so many factors I can’t go into all of them here. They are well documented in scientific literature but I believe some are genetic, even though most people don’t tend to think so.

Crime, Politics

Research thus far indicates that although there is no certain criminal gene, there are genes that promote certain behaviors common in criminals. Two of these genetically influenced behaviors are high impulsivity and a decreased regard for the rights of others.

What is also interesting is the voting behavior of most criminals. Without saying which party criminals largely tend to vote for, I will say it would not be surprising if the majority of cheating were to be found to favor that same party. Unfortunately, sometimes it takes many years for deception to become widely known, even when it is widely practiced. However, if this cheating continues to be a winning strategy, then those who are not likely to cheat (the other party) are doomed to continue to lose. Thus we have here at least one mechanism by which history repeats itself, and great civilizations fall, as moral decline becomes increasingly acceptable.

Service

I think in all kinds of populations of animals, there may be a "just help, then get out of the way" gene that has group-evolved, that keeps individuals from hanging around past their usefulness and using up needed resources. Of course, because of the very way that genetics works, we don't all have the same degree of this gene.

Fairness, Adversity, Trust

From childhood on, things that tug at the heart strings teach the heart what is fair. But today in the U.S. we get the vast majority of the heart-rending dramas and lyrics from only one political view, not both. People of this view are predominantly attracted to and employed by media, so their view naturally comes through in their work. The trend will continue to be heart-string persuasion through media.

I believe it is a behavioral genetic tendency that people during extended easy times increasingly focus their minds on media, especially entertainment, and sometimes on extending their generosity way beyond their traditional circle, even outside it to the exclusion of it, resulting in the distrust of that traditional circle itself. I think there is a thrill to be gotten by daring to go outside this circle.

Also I think there is variable genetic tendency for most people to want to fight for something and fight against something else. Within this, there's variation on how long a person's fuse is, or how easy it is to light it.

There's also variation in how much rationalization vs. reason goes into the why of the fight, in other words, assumption vs. fact-finding. I think the Assumers especially tend to disbelieve the genetic component, tending to look outward for their object of blame, not considering the inward aspect as one possibility. So, when there is nothing in a group's traditional circle worth fighting against, many in the group will start exaggerating things and then find something to fight about inside their circle, to satisfy their urge. Some will not do this, and those few just stand there speechless as this type of thing occurs.

Looking back in history, to wars that were fought to gain or maintain our freedoms, and comparing these wars to our petty present day in-fighting, it appears that the blood sacrifice of many of those on whose backs we comfortably live, is out of vogue.

When there is lack of adversity, I believe there is a variable predisposition for some people to push the envelope and continue to demand more of what they want, tending to ignore long term consequences, while others are more predisposed to back off, feeling that they don't want to go too far out on a limb. (2018)

Success-Failure Cycles

The human mind is a mix of many things, including Emotion and Reason. At some points and places in history, populations have had a fairly good balance between Emotion and Reason. But human nature seems to ensure that we will eventually under-do or over-do most anything, including Emotion and Reason.

I am working on a hypothesis that humans exhibit an epigenetic trend that, when times are easy for several decades, or adversity is relatively low for a number of years, these epigenetic switches increasingly are flipped on in many people, and cause them to overemphasize the importance of Emotion, and that somehow this ensures the survival of our species, or at least it may have in the tribal situations of the past, as follows:

It makes our group weak, which will soon lead to our downfall and thus the return of the Adversity that st place. One tell-tale statistic is that procreation tends to go down in the more highly educated who also happen to be fairly well insulated from Adversity. Also, increasing technology beyond a certain point leads the productivity curve into diminishing returns, then negative returns as we become more dependent on it, which is a form of weakness. (The Amish seem to have recognized this.)

Some of us realize this consciously, but Emotion-based thinkers will blindly elect a government that promises equal success for everyone, which is far beyond the realistic goal of a government that seeks equal opportunity for everyone. Eventually when these unrealistic promises come crashing down, as history shows us they will, we are forced to return to an economy where we must totally use Reason to obtain food and shelter, and Emotion be damned, because it will not shelter nor will it feed us. Thus, we will have unwittingly achieved the human nature genetic goal of returning us back to the basis of our strength. Carle Zimmerman describes some aspects of these cycles in "Family and Civilization", one of my favorite books.

Trustworthiness

When looking for signs of trustworthiness in others, we use differing degrees of different criteria. How do the

genes that affect brain wiring and chemistry, affect these decisions? And what psychological techniques can we use to promote trustworthiness? Knowing how genes affect these functions could help us develop these techniques. However, it appears that "political correctness" is poised to cut off funding to any genetic research that is not likely to fit its narrative, which is that everyone is born with basically the same "blank slate" mental capacity (aside from those who are obviously brain damaged).

Selfishness, Society

Why are we created with selfish tendencies if we just have to learn to overcome them? Only God has the full answer. I suppose, a person who has a default selfish tendency has a better chance of survival in times of starvation, so this default is strongly inherited as a base level mindset. But our ability to learn our way around it is also strongly inherited, allowing us to build civil societies, which helps prevent starvation. So when civil society is stripped away for whatever reason and starvation ensues, our learning also gets stripped away, and we are back to the default. Therefore, it is wise for us to study societies that have been more civil and less civil, and use them as examples of what to be, but perhaps more important, what not to be - so that when we start slipping, we will recognize it.

Morality Genes

One way of telling a difference between right and wrong is to answer this: What actions promote the *safest* society for the long run? Also, happiness must figure into it as well, and when we're safe, we're more likely to be happy. Having said all that, history should be our guide. Look back to history, to guide you forward.

I think our genes have selected for many of these "safety-promoting" behaviors already, but we are continuing to sort them out as we swim in different types of societies. The genes of fish are selected for different salinity, and as our societies change, we can look to history to see which societies caused certain genes to dominate and be passed along. There is a theory that Ashkenazi Jewish society for many years selected for superior intelligence, which may be why even today this group has a higher average I.Q. than other groups.

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Forethought

Is a short term self-congratulatory mental "feelgood" based on dopamine? Is the long term feeling of satisfaction based on a different brain system? What can encourage long term thinking over short term? Are there effective ways to teach and practice long term thought? Does all this show on a pet scan? Could there be a brain reward system for foregoing the dopamine rush? After asking these questions, I searched a little and found a study that begins to scratch the surface:

https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/67004/study-pinpoints-regions-brain-involved-delayed-gratification

But from a religious view, it can be said that a deep satisfaction, based on God's love, is the currency God pays to your heart for giving up immediate gratification, no longer the short term "feelgoods" that the heart of a child desires. This is part of growing up.

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Personality Traits

Behavioral Genetics has already shown us that basic personality traits such as general impulsiveness are partially due to a genetic component. Now, conjectures as to what type of environments shaped these genetic changes, are another matter altogether, but I think these answers will emerge from this young science.

Other general personality traits like guilt or self-love can be overdone by human beings. Everyone has known someone who feels so guilty they don't like themselves, but there are even some who carry this to the extreme point of guilt on steroids, hating their own race, and could be accused of racism against their own race.

I also have a theory that some cultures have different "enough is enough" points, or tolerance points, and this may have a genetic component as well. Of course, when searching for evidence to support our theories, we must

keep in mind that we cannot ignore the trends whenever we spot a few exceptions to these trends.

The Brain Muscle

I recall when in college, after studying a lot over a few days, especially for a final, my brain was smarter with everything else as well. I was able to recall things better, able to make new associations between things better. Then during the break between quarters, it would mostly drop back to normal. I attribute this to increased brain blood flow and the brain tissue changes associated with increased use, similar to muscle tissue changes after exercise.

Telomeres & Thermodynamics

Because our telomeres are so short, eventually the second law of thermodynamics will get us.

Flexibility

I have talked before about the thought process of flexibility. A person could have negative behavioral tendencies and also have a low or high flexibility to avoid those tendencies. I think genetics is involved in mental flexibility but it is likely not the whole story, and I think genetic influence varies from one person to another.

Ancient Understanding

I would imagine some Vikings may have liked the cold weather, believing it would kill anyone stupid enough not to prepare for it, thus ensuring some level of long-term thought processes within the gene pool. Although of course they didn't use the phrase "gene pool", but likely did have some basic understanding of heritability as most societies did at that time.

Emotion, Reason, Adversity

In my thoughts, what keeps on emerging as significant, is the flexibility one has, to change their own perspective *within reason*, not just within emotion. This allows a person to be "born again" not just spiritually but by surrendering the old immature thought patterns up to God, while adopting new thought patterns as the person becomes a better driver toward his/her destiny. But "within reason" means we must have integrity to what works in the long run.

Human tendencies are such that Emotion is usually involved in short term thought, while Reason is usually more involved in long term thought. In a given population, some people have more emotion, some have more reason.

My theory is that during times of serious adversity, or "economic collapse" adversity such as widespread starvation, most people shift toward reason out of necessity, whereas during extended decades of no "economic collapse" adversity they shift to primarily emotion, possibly due to some epigenetic mechanism that ultimately and unwittingly results in the cyclical return of more "economic collapse" adversity, which is what genes crave in order to build strength again. Well I know they don't crave it but they are designed so that this occurs. (~2016)

Human Nature, Culture

I may have written about this before, but over the decades I have seen a lot of situations that lead to this particular theory of "human nature genetics": Minority cultures (including white people wherever they are a minority) generally try to stay out of trouble with the majority culture, until their numbers grow to what many of them begin to feel is a force to be reckoned with. Then, more of them stop checking their aggression.

So, to those majority people who live in areas with small numbers of minorities, I say do not extrapolate your present experience to the future, when minority numbers will increase. Because so will their boldness, accordingly. Now, I apply this to cultures, which might include race but also exists within the same race: For example, conflicts between the Catholics and Protestants in 20th century Ireland, or the Tutsis and Hutus in 1994 Rwanda. So this mistaken judging of the future large population based on the present small population, is a type of inaccurate extrapolation, and a type of prejudice, really.

Another theory I have is that some groups of people tend to genetically be higher guilt feelers or self-blamers

or self-group-blamers, than other groups.

And yet another theory is that some groups genetically have a higher bar on their "enough is enough" point, than other groups. This might be called a high tolerance thought pattern.

Mixing all 3 of these phenomena together (inaccurate judgment extrapolation from small to large groups, self-group-blaming, and high tolerance thought patterns) is a genetically influenced recipe for cultural disaster for the unfortunate group that has them.

With regard to thought processes: If salt is intelligence, and pepper is rebelliousness, then some populations in the world are mostly salt, and they will put up with what they find intellectually disgusting. Some are mostly pepper and they will fight but not wisely. Some are the right mix of salt and pepper and will create a mostly free and prosperous country. As the ingredients change, so will the outcome.

Of course, this depends on how many and which epigenetic switches have been flipped in most of the population. In other words, how many people have reached their "enough is enough" point. (Dec. 2020)

Spatial Coordination

Some people either have better visual spatial coordination, or better visual spatial consideration of others, or a combination of both. Walking in a store, some people give you a wide berth, others walk in front of you. Same with driving. Some people are oblivious, others have got to be doing it on purpose or at least with purposeful negligence.

Pro-slavery vs Anti-slavery

Emerging evidence in the field of Behavioral Genetics demonstrates that the way a person thinks, in other words, their mindset, has a strong genetic as well as environmental component. In light of this new science, the question that many of us want answered, whether we know it or not, is: What types of thinkers believed slavery was fair, in the U.S in 1860?

The first thing we notice is that pro-slavery thinkers were white. This is a damning indictment against the genetic mindset predispositions of white people. However, historically, all races have owned slaves. And, history documents also there were a large number of whites in 1860 who were anti-slavery. If both groups were alive today, we could administer psychological tests to each type, and compare these tests to their own genetic samples.

But since they are all long dead, we could look for people alive today to complete the study. I would propose psychological testing which would divide participants into two groups who could be representative of those pro-slavery and anti-slavery thinkers of the past.

However, this is where bias could be introduced into the study. An experimenter may for example suggest a "division model" where those who tend to trust others that they don't know, are analogous to the anti-slavery thinkers, while another group, who believes trust must be earned through trustworthiness, would then be assumed to be like the pro-slavery thinkers. This would inject bias because it can't reliably be inferred that someone who believes trust should be earned, would also be more likely to be pro-slavery in 1860.

Yet I've seen studies where assumptions like this are made, and media people who are shocked by certain study results often just read the abstract of the study, which doesn't include all the nuts and bolts where something may not be connected properly, and could cause the whole study to come flying apart under scrutiny.

Pre-civil war pro-slavery and anti-slavery writings could be analyzed for certain comparisons, such as whether the writer made many unvalidated assumptions, did they tend to be fact based, were they overgeneralizing their facts to rationalize their proposed actions. Even the outcome of this analysis would be prone to bias, depending on how the experimenter believed unfairness was generated, because at some point, for example, what is considered excessive blind trust by one experimenter, is not considered so by another experimenter.

My hypothesis at this time is that people scoring high on a "callousness" survey might be closer to the pro-slavery camp, while people scoring high on "empathy" could be analogous to the anti-slavery position. Callousness and empathy do have genetic underpinnings.

Additionally, even if someone is not particularly callous, he might still rationalize (as a defense or coping mechanism) that some callous-like beliefs are acceptable, especially if he stands to gain by acting on those beliefs. Use of defense & coping mechanisms does have a genetic component.

Another question arises: When a person has power over another person, what type of thinker is the powerful person when he tends to take advantage of the situation for his own benefit at the expense of the victim, by rationalizing that it is fair for him to do so? What type of person tends to do this, and what if any are their genetic differences?

I recall there have already been some famous psychological experiments in the past where people rationalized that delivering an electrical shock to another person was acceptable in certain circumstances. (See the chapter on "Rationalizing" in this document.) In other words, some people are more prone to Rationalizing, while others are more prone to holding to Principle.

But given that through history, all races have held slaves, the genetics of Rationalizing would have more to do with thought pattern predispositions, and less to do with race.

In fact, slavery exists in some places today, although it is either hidden from authorities or authorities are complicit. Some of these modern day slave owners could be interviewed for personality tendencies, although these interviews would likely take place in jail and answers might not be accurate, since the interviewees might believe their answers could somehow change their time served.

Culture

There should be a book written called "Brain Science and Government", or, "Selfishness and Government". It would categorize predispositions in groups of people, and the way those people govern themselves.

Questions that would be researched include: In some groups, could there be a mental "second guessing the self" mechanism that works well during adversity but becomes a liability (even to hating one's own kind) during extended times of prosperity? What thought ranges could be examined, for example the Impulsivity range, the Compassion range, IQ range, EQ range, Mathematical range, Verbal range, Sociability range, Psychosis range, Trustworthiness range, Anger range, Revenge range, Forgiveness range, Long/Short term mindset range, Commitment to Principle range, Flexibility range, etc.? What is the desirable mix of these ranges in the average citizen, in order to form a long lasting, benevolent government?

New research would likely focus also on "Perceived Selfishness" and difference between groups, including definitions of selfishness: One group may define selfishness as the government to refusing to give money to the poor; another group may define it as the government giving money to the poor, to buy votes and power, while causing dependence.

How would these views correlate with certain behaviors, for example, the predisposition for calling attention to the self? Are there examples of groups that developed sustainable societies in one situation, and when the situation changes, they achieve more or less success in the new situation? Is this success sustainable and agreeable to most of the populace? Are there cultures that developed different answers or had different genes selected in the same situation, such as Eskimos and Vikings, both in cold climates? What are the mental status signs in the population indicating it is headed toward a civilizational rise or fall (refer to Carle Zimmerman's "Family and Civilization")?

Toenails vs. Behavioral Genetics

In a population that says it values a free and safe society, why does genetics favor toenails in 99.99% of the organisms, while favoring common sense in less than 50% of them? Because people are more concerned about what would look funny, than they are about a free and safe society. (4/24/21)

Mixed Intelligence

It's not just IQ that allows some societies to thrive in the long term, it's a broader umbrella I call Mixed Intelligence, in the right environment. It must be the right mix of brain functions such as memory, emotional intelligence, creativity, innovation, mathematics, humor, verbal ability, morality, trust, trustworthiness, integrity, honesty, inclusivity, flexibility, curiosity, principled thought, long term thought, impulse control, discipline, compassion, pattern recognition, and many more.

Each human brain has its own unique mix of these, in different levels and types. But for a certain mix to be productive, it must be present in an environment suited especially for its type, meaning not just physical environment but also social structure. Otherwise, the old saying "a fish out of water" applies. This is where

flexibility and adaptability become more important than we may have previously thought. (May, 2021)

Victory or Surrender

Every decade that goes by, this becomes clearer: Half the population tends to pass their genes on through surrender, the other half does it through victory. This has prehistoric roots but brain wiring today still reflects it. (8/2/21)

More Brain Wiring

I think that unbeknownst to the conscious, much of what the subconscious does is pattern recognition, and then the subconscious assigns that pattern a cause, as part of the process of building an intuition. However, making the conscious aware of this process, so that it may apply a reasonable influence, is another predisposition altogether, which can be practiced and improved upon to a limited degree. (3/7/22)

Advantage to Disadvantage

I have written previously about how the same species may favor different genes, even in the same basic environment, such as Eskimos and Vikings. But when sub-species are taken out of their environment, or the environment changes for whatever reason, there may not be time for behavioral genetics to adapt. Some genetic advantages may become disadvantages. One example is that bugs still fly into light bulbs. It can't be good for their little brains. And of course, they don't realize what they're doing. (12/4/22)

Opposite or Similar?

Keep in mind that in biology, some opposites have similarities & vice versa. And often there are counterintuitive findings and overlap. Christopher Badcock writes about this in 2016, regarding the autism-psychosis spectrum. Each category may not fit neatly into its own box. For example, both autistics and psychotics can have strong positive and negative emotions, but they are processed differently. Even for people in the normal mentality range, there are significant variations in emotional processing from one person to the next. One person such as a soldier might be able to channel fear and anger into a calm but steely resolve and determination, like changing the frequency on a radio, whereas another person might feel the need to vent the anger and fear until the negativity subsides. Of course, we can learn to change our responses during our lives (i.e. flexibility), but humans have genetic limits to this (i.e. capability). (2/25/23) (Substack 5/18/23)

More Than Genetics

Fortunately, the human experience is more than just about passing your genes along. Most people's brains are wired so that we need to feel a self-worth. We look around us and see that everyone is different. So how do we arrive at our self-worth, since by the world's standards, there is always someone who is better than us in some way?

Many of us are also wired to believe in a higher power. I believe our higher power caused us to be wired this way. For many, the higher power tells them that their self-worth can be evaluated accurately only by the higher power. Also for many, the higher power is loving, instead of a cruel taskmaster. This provides the thankfulness incentive.

But also, humans, like other animals, contribute to the success of procreation by assisting other humans in ways that lead them to their partners, or ways that help the partners stay together to procreate. So, part of self-worth can be that a person, although childless, helped others in ways that allowed others to have children. This is a form of altruism, which is genetic through group selection.
(9/28/24)

The Changing of the American Psyche

We've all noticed and felt this change, especially those of us with numerous decades under our belts (or over our belts, as the case may be). I think it's due to the widespread lack of life-threatening adversity as I've written about in the chapter on adversity, but the domino before that is brain function.

We are wired to respond with increased urgency in times of great adversity stress. And we are wired to respond with decreased urgency in times of lesser adversity stress. We might also agree that people define

adversity stress differently, and that the ways we respond to it vary from person to person.

But the emerging science of Behavioral Genetics has provided some interesting evidence of something that not everyone agrees with: Different types of people respond differently to adversity stress not only due to environmental factors, but also due to genetic factors. One example is neuropeptide-Y (1).

The genetic makeup of the average American citizen has changed over the years, due to demographic changes. Behavioral Genetics addresses the link between behavior (what the brain tells someone to do) and genes.

At this point, the reader might be encouraged to seek evidence on Pubmed or elsewhere, regarding any questions that may have arisen. I would caution however that no matter how lofty and scientific-sounding an article is, that the researchers were funded, and that the source of funding must be considered in evaluating the results.

1. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/18385673/

(11-5-24)

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Of Mice and Preppers

In John Calhoun's "Universe 25" mouse experiment, a small group of mice in a decent size space were given all the nourishment they needed. Of course the mouse population quickly exploded and the space became extremely overcrowded. But even with the continuation of adequate food and water for the larger population, the mice became combative and anti-social to the point of total extinction. Not one survived.

One thought is that a large number of animals interacting with one another constitutes an overall "collective mindset". The mouse collective mindset was not genetically equipped to survive the unexpected behavioral problems emerging from the unnatural environment they found themselves in.

It brings to mind Joseph Tainter's theory of complexity as a reason for societal collapse, as well as Ugo Bardi's interpretation of Tainter. Bardi emphasized "diminishing returns", where "resources to maintain the complexity" become depleted.

Adequate nourishment was provided to all the mice, but due to overcrowding, social complexity increased and interactional problems developed that would not have developed in the wild. And the poor mice had brains that limited their exploration of sufficient other "available problem-solving avenues" during these new interactional problems. If the mice had thought, "Since Mr. Calhoun has limited our space to this small area, not proportionate to what humans have, we should decrease the number of litters we have", they might have survived. So at least one of the "resources to maintain the complexity" becomes "brain power".

With humans, overcrowding is not an insurmountable problem because there is plenty of sparsely inhabited land available. The complexity problem for humans seems to be (1) the sheer amount of useful information that the average person must know and use in order to make the best long-term decisions for future generations, and (2) the sheer amount of useless but alluring information that pulls us away from the useful information.

Will people have the right type of brain power to surmount this increasing complexity? In humans, the specific brain power increasingly lacking is probably Foresight. Ironically the percentage of foresight thinkers in a population increases during tough times (How will I continue to feed my kids over the years?) and decreases during easy times (How will I be able to get a new phone?)

Before retirement, I was increasingly on the phone with I.T. about computer problems. Systems continue to get more complex, and thus fragile. Humans might do well to halt the advancements into excess complexity and

learn to live with what we've got. But that won't happen because if your enemies develop superior technology, you'd better have it too or your enemies will eventually control your life or wipe you out, whichever they feel like.

Once again the ironic picture emerges that by trying to reduce adversity through scientific advancement, we are reducing the incentives and mindsets that allow our survival.

With AI now an advancing reality, I recall in 1968 seeing the movie "2001: A Space Odyssey". In a scene near the end, the astronaut asks the computer to let him back into the ship. The computer replies "I'm sorry Dave. I'm afraid I can't do that." At the time I thought, "Glad that can't happen."

Based on cycles in human history, odds are another great adversity will smack us in the face & allow regrowth of that dormant foresight.

Most people are dependent on electricity for life. The child-like way of thinking is simply that things will continue the way they are, so I'll think about something else. That's lack of foresight, and it's a pandemic now.

But if that weren't enough, realize that AI's food is electricity. Given the omnipresence of the web as well as some overly-trusting power companies, AI will soon control its own food supply. (Henry the Eighth comes to mind for some reason.)

Enter the Preppers who have figured out how to make their own electricity or even live without it, in an extended emergency (like longer than a few weeks). Prepping is also about having the right social situation nearby, where cooler heads prevail (remember the mice). I won't go into it any further here, since there's plenty of info online. But suffice it to say, the more I think about it, the more likely I am to just buy that wood burning stove and some installation materials, and keep 'em in the garage.
3-9-25 (Substack 3-9-25)

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Survival of the Surrenderers & Fighters

One of my hypotheses is that in human history, having a sizeable number of surrenderers in the population was probably useful in passing along a maximum number of their genes after losing a tribal battle or war.

Interestingly, the surrenderer mentality continues today, I suspect as a matter of Behavioral Genetics, as the people with this trait subconsciously seek to identify and define "the most powerful group" and surrender to or fall in with it in some way. This could be the basis of Stockholm Syndrome.

The fighters and surrenderers may disagree on how to run a society, but among the fighters there is naturally, some considerable fighting.

Some fighters simply act on a genetically wired brain pathway to "fight for something and against something else", and they do it without considering any morals. Today we call them psychotic.

But I think the vast majority of fighters have genes for the following mental process:

Genetic Brain-Wired Pathway 1: "fight for something and against something else" sends message to =>
Genetic Brain-Wired Pathway 2: "the oppressed are also the morally powerful" sends message to =>
Genetic Brain-Wired Pathway 3: "Desire to decide who is oppressed, so Pathway 1 can be acted on."

The difference is how the fighters decide who is oppressed. In this decision-making, are fighters:
More (a) emotional or (b) fact-based?
Do they (a) lack the capability to consider a large number of facts, or (b) do they have this capability?
Do they (a) decide impulsively or (b) take more time to consider?
Are they (a) more likely to rationalize their belief with attractive-sounding words or (b) consider all pros & cons regardless of how the language sounds?

As you might suspect, type (a) would never admit to being type (a). But you may be able to tell type (a) from type (b) simply by the number of detailed facts & figures each one uses in their arguments.

Many fighters erroneously define the oppressed as simply "those who are unfortunate in life, **always** being oppressed by those who are fortunate." More accurately, the fortunate may **sometimes** oppress the unfortunate, but it's a fallacy to believe it happens **always**.

The "righteousness of the underdog" does not always occur. It is not inherent. Righteousness is not based on underdog status. It is based on righteous status. And righteous status means considering a whole lot of facts and figures, some we might not even like.

(April 2025)

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Positive Reciprocation
Some cultures emphasize "positive reciprocation" more than others. I suspect that this may have a behavioral genetics component & that it is one of the ingredients in a highly cohesive culture, promoting cooperation among larger numbers of people. 10-26-25

The Social Math
Social ability is like mathematical ability – part of it is how hard you try, but the main factors are a person's genetic predisposition and capability. (2/25/26)

Genes and Jobs and Politics
There are studies out there about genetic influences on politics and occupations. I do believe there are behavioral genetic influences on a person's political choices, but I'm a bit skeptical about what the research says on this because for the most part, certain types of thinkers are attracted to certain types of jobs, just like certain types of thinkers are attracted to certain politics.
One occupation is that of the university researcher. There are surveys showing that people who work in universities are overwhelmingly attracted to one particular political party. Therefore, I suspect there is quite a significant amount of bias in university research towards favoring the ideologies of the party that most university workers are naturally attracted to.
Another interesting stat is from a Syracuse survey, finding recently that when asked which political party they voted with, 92% of journalists indicated either Independent or Democrat, but not Republican.
(3-8-26)

Self Deception
Ironically, the way people's brains are designed to work often deceives them. (3/12/26)

Certain types of thinkers are attracted to certain types of jobs, for the most part.

End of Chapter - Genetics

God All-Powerful

Since God is all-powerful, He is also all-knowing. We should give the credit to Him for everything, since He works it all for good.
We must surrender to Him as a matter of realizing these truths. So, this section contains:

1. Surrender to God
2. Credit to God
3. God all-knowing
4. God all-powerful

Surrender to God

Focus, Priority, Principle
When I can manage to stop the slide show of my thoughts, remaining on the one that says “God is number one”, then I can move forward with Him.

Direction
Sweet Paradox: The more I give my direction up to God, the better direction my shadow-self horse will have.

Transforming
Throughout our lives we are discovering bad thought patterns we should let go of, and send up to God, so He can make them into something else.

Positive vs Negative Submission
Submission to God is not always done in the right way. You can have ungrateful, sour submission to God (It’s God’s world, I just live in it), or grateful submission to God (It’s a relief he has taken responsibility for all this off my shoulders).

To the Degree
It’s clear that when I am going along doing something, and I get that subtle little feeling that says “hey I’m doing pretty good here”, then that is a glory that needs to be given up to God. The id however, replies “What am I supposed to be, just an instrument that gets no credit at all?” The proper realization is this: If you are not satisfied with being merely an instrument of God, then you will not be satisfied. To the degree that you send the glory up, you are allowed to feel a satisfaction and relief in your heart.

Surrender Entirely

This self-destructive thought pattern that we all have to differing degrees - it must be discarded and handed to God so he can dispose of it, or change it into something good, as only He can do. But careful - sometimes it can masquerade as His voice. So give your entire self up. Then submit to His guidance.

Spiritual & Mind Exercises
A list of priorities of brain exercises to do daily to prevent apathy:
Surrender to God, explore the internal jury that tends to ignore God's plan in order to selfishly make its own plan.
Explore good shadow self vs bad shadow self.
Remember Stephen Covey said "I am not my tendencies". We can let these tendencies go.
The brain is like a diamond with a thousand facets.
Do not let the internal jury define your humility. God should define it so you can be humble during feast or famine.
Don't overthink it.

Normal Helplessness
As a matter of practicality, every day should contain the sincere cry of "God, help me!"

Christian Mindset Physiology
The mechanics of a daily Christian creed (part 1):
God is number one.
Don't think beyond God being number one.
You don't know what God has next for you.
Accept God's plan.
What you see as hardship, He turns into good.
If you do good things, send the credit up to God.
By sending it to God, you have cleared the way for your heart to feel His love, which is relaxing satisfaction.
(Part 2, more in depth):

You may have an inborn conscience that guides you to serve and protect others, especially the innocent others, and to serve & protect yourself as a vehicle for continuing to serve & protect others.

This may have been amplified over the years through experience.

But even on top of this, the frequent practice of realizing that Jesus paid a horrible price for our admission to Heaven, should amplify it further through the conscience's natural reflex to feel that something is owed back to Jesus and God.

Since there is no way to pay it back, you may feel an amplified desire, to make a stronger effort to serve & protect. Rest in the knowledge that your efforts are appreciated by God, and the inadequacy to pay Him back fully is lovingly forgiven.

The definition of "serve & protect" must include the effort to move away from any disgusting & grotesque self-absorption, dropping that part of the personality as a child drops other personality immaturities during his growth.

The Lord will then fill this personality void with a new part of the personality, that proactively seeks opportunities to serve & protect.

But since the heart will sometimes slip back towards self-absorption, the head will need to monitor & spot this backsliding, and frequently guide the heart to ask "How can I help someone right now?"

The heart will need to learn that since self-congratulation should no longer be part of its overall reward, this void is now filled with the Lord's reward coming from the simple fact that you are saved from hell, and also will be allowed to enter Heaven. God may also allow you some mental rewards for serving and protecting others, but these are not self-glory rewards. They are mentally felt as thankfulness is given to God for your ability to help others.

Within these new mechanics of virtue, the heart must also learn not to selfishly expect any reward, but instead to simply wait and know that God sees the heart's virtuous efforts, and knows these efforts, although imperfect, are striving towards good and right, and God is pleased with the striving of your heart towards good.

Part of these virtuous and humble efforts is the returning of any glory felt, back to God. The heart is then not clogged with glory. Only God can handle glory. God is pleased when efforts are made to send it to Him.

The heart may then feel a satisfaction in being a conduit, or vessel, or tool that produces no good in and of itself, but only when God uses it or fills it. The heart may then be able to feel God's love even more fully. (12/3/23)

Plan to Learn

If you have to give up part of yourself, that's ok, as long as you are surrendering to God in the process. He fills any new voids, as long as you hold the door open for Him. Could He make the door stay open for Himself? Yes, but His plan is for us to Learn many things while we are in our human forms.

Solution to the black hole beacon

One day, it occurred to me: If I inadvertently provide an example of what not to do, then at least I've provided something positive, although unintentionally. But then I thought, what is the word for "a person who is an example of how not to be"? Maybe the phrase "black hole beacon" should describe this person.

I think God at times has used me to be this person to show others the right way, but of course we strive to no longer be this person so God may use us as a positive example instead. Don't be a black hole beacon. You really don't want to be.

The way to be a beacon of light, is to give it up to God - the glory and the sin, so He can put them both where they need to be. This frees you psychologically, so that you no longer depend on the previous familiarity of self-sabotage. You can then handle any glory that comes your way because you know it's going straight to God.

And if you sin, reject it and send it up so God can dispose of it or change it, and you can get back to heading along the right path, unhampered and untethered by it. Of course, as long as you are in the human body, this process has to be repeated, because sin is like a weed that may be clipped off at the surface, and grows back if unchecked. However, I believe that is one reason God put us here: to learn over and over to better surrender to Him, which is through this recurring process.

Submission & Having to Be Shown

Lord I know that the more I submit to you, the more I can feel your love. Please help me submit to you even more, without having to be shown, that this is the way I should be.

Repentance & Having to Be Shown

Be repentant, before God has to show you it's the right way to be.

Grappling

Some may say "you must embrace your sins to stop them". I think what they mean is don't deny them. Realize fully what they are and that they are yours, before you can begin to deal with them. But after this occurs, I prefer to think of grappling with them, with God on my side. And through surrender to God, the shadow self will be on your side as well.

Selfishness

When you surrender to God, you may feel as though you are losing yourself, but you are losing your selfishness.

Dream Control

The concept of dream control got me to introspecting - the way to solve problems is to give up focus on the self, and focus on two things - the problem, and God. Then, you seem to become a person in a movie theatre, watching God solve the problem in front of you, controlling your actions as though you are a participant in the movie.

But, to begin this process you must "let" God take control, and your desire to do good and right things will take over. By "let God" I mean give up your false sense of control, because He is already in control.

As a side note, there is a song about dream control, called "Silent Lucidity" by Queensryche. I have to admit,

for some reason watching the video and listening to it causes my eyes to well up for some reason. I think it's because the lyrics feel like they are sung from the point of view of a protective father.

Constructive Shadow and Destructive Shadow

Surrender to God is highly effective for overcoming the self-destructive part of the "shadow" self. The destructive part of the shadow self tends to make you stop short of surrender to God, languishing in the realm of second-guessing God, as the serpent did in Eden. God is my navigator – don't overthink it!

Pray to God to minimize the destructive part of the shadow self, leaving the constructive part of the shadow self to work with God to keep you on the right track, so the conscious doesn't have to think so much about staying on track. The conscious can then focus on what it does best - coming up with ideas that help keep this train moving along the right track.

The Woods

Am I almost out of the other side of the woods, or just in deeper? It's time to surrender to God again. (1/25/21)

Assumption

Sometimes my mind still slips into supposing that people are thinking good or bad things about me when there is really no indication of such. I have to remind myself to give it up to God, so He can commence to disposing of this supposing.

Practice

You can feel the enjoyment from things in the physical world, just practice giving the credit to God while you enjoy it. It may feel mutually exclusive at first, but you'll get better at it.

Tool

We don't get to keep any of God's glory for being one of His tools. What credit does a hammer get for being a hammer? No, God gets the glory, we get His Love.

Eventually

Glory and sin: We should continue to pass these things to God, because he knows what to do with them, and eventually we will pass ourselves as well.

Surrender to God, Head & Heart

Despite attempts to give up the "selfish heart" to God, it keeps creeping back in, like a twig that often needs pruning. This is common for Christians, but I wonder if my id has convinced my ego that it may one day be called upon for self-preservation, so must be kept in reserve and can't be totally let go of. My reply is that I should realize the difference between the selfish heart, and the selfless heart where its duty is defined as preserving the self to the extent that you can be around longer to help more people.

And how can I tell which thought pattern is grabbed ahold of the joystick? Sometimes I can feel a satisfaction or even superiority in my easy circumstances. But then when consciousness shines a light on that, I can feel shame trying to grab control so that I don't feel superior or get overconfident.

I am tired of this yoyo up and down. The heart likes it though because it likes strong emotion, positive or negative. As a matter of spiritual and mental practice I should often pray that God will put me in the balance where I go to neither extreme. And I should ask Him to unleash the strong emotion of *passion for fairness*, which is a strong inborn desire to be fair to others and to the self as a way of having the best thought patterns to help others, because a person wallowing in either shame or conceit is not helping others.

So the fuel the heart should run on is the *passion for fairness*. I have had this since childhood, but the head has not always defined fairness in the right way. I believe the heart can get behind the head's definition of fairness, as long as the definition is clear.

We can define fairness as helping others, but the difficulty arises when there may be multiple ways to help people, some better in the short run, some better in the long run or big picture. These will always be a matter of opinion, so the heart may be left wondering which of these the head will lead it to, and may not get behind a

definition that wavers too much.

So, integrity becomes an important component. But flexibility remains important as well because all situations differ. This is all impossible to quantify and therefore impossible to chart a straightforward course. Just as liberals and conservatives negotiate, the opposing thought patterns in our heads negotiate also, in each unique situation.

The *passion for fairness* leads to a passion for helping others. This process should be kept at the forefront, and the head should strive to define this help as accurately as possible so the path can be more easily followed & the heart will have confidence in the head leading it, but with enough flexibility so that if the path takes a turn, the head and heart can both turn with it.

I like when things can be decided clearly in exact terms, and this is not one of those things. But writing it out does provide a much better map than no introspection at all. The daily and hourly effort of following the map becomes the effort that must be fueled by these thoughts I have listed above.

The Song Changes Into Satisfaction

3-22-20 Yesterday morning, with the pressure of Covid19 on us all, I opened my mind to the voice of God and felt like I received the message "Give it up" - meaning, give up my false sense of control. Later, my mind started spontaneously coming up with a song, with the chords and vocal melody, but only a few words. It was like I was passively listening to it be written. But not knowing how to write musical notes, and having no access to an instrument nor any time anyway, I couldn't record it, and today the song is gone, except for the word handshake, which is something we can't do now with Covid19. But instead of a sadness that the song is gone, I feel a satisfaction that God is with me.

Horse and Rider

Calm realization of our sin, and then calm surrender to God, helps the shadow self (as described by Jung), or the heart (as described by Thomas Jefferson) achieve a comfortable unity with our other thought processes. The heart is where our passion is, and it values fairness.

The Bible helps the head & heart correctly define fairness, especially as we spend more time with it, as reason and emotion discuss their views on fairness, so our hearts and heads can get on board with this unity.

Also useful is the releasing of sin to go up to God, so He can deal with it in the way only He can. The shadow self may be used in defense of the innocent, like a defensive weapon, but it must be respected, used properly, just like our mathematical abilities, and kept in the right place, to be effective for good purposes, like a trained horse, as opposed to a wild one.

Jesus is the horse whisperer. Even if our horse (shadow, heart) is not wild, our rider (conscious, head) may not have the map (Bible) and may be directionless, allowing the horse to wander or even take off running, so that the rider blames other things, maybe even the horse, for his poor direction.

The more we believe we want to be a good person, the more likely we are to calmly surrender to God and to calmly say, "Do right because it is right" (quote from Stephen Covey), and this puts the rider on the good horse, to fight together as one unit, for good. And the Bible is the map that the rider uses, to avoid the paths that lead in a circle, and instead head down the right path to do good and right things.

The Grey

Years ago, I watched that movie "The Grey" where at the end, the main character asks God to help him, looks to the sky, and perceives nothing. He then decides to fight the wolf on his own. To me, this is why God is considered a father, not a mother. He promotes your independence. I would imagine the film makers figured people would interpret it different ways, based on their own beliefs. This however, does not mean that beliefs about God are arbitrary.

Don't Punish the Self

Don't give up your physical success, just give the credit to God. That way you sacrifice the credit, and use your success to help others, just like some football players do when they cross the goal line and look upward and point to God.

Hormones

When I do something right, I strive to give God the credit. Send that dopamine rush up to God, and He will send down an oxytocin shower for you. When I do something wrong, God is the only one who can ultimately one day make something good come from it. He also allows us to trade our remorse, for resolve.

Nudge

I once told someone long ago that you can only do what you think is best at the time. I would like to add to that. Our guide for deciding what is best should be the Lord, including the Bible. The Bible doesn't tell us what to do in every situation but instead nudges our decision in the right direction.

A Dream

I just had a dream where I was living in a poor neighborhood & one of my sons was there, about 6 years old. I had told him that we could work with the people in the neighborhood when he becomes a young man, to build a park in the neighborhood where kids could play and people could enjoy being together. But a street criminal came in our house one day and got me alone, and basically said it wasn't going to be that way, and I had to lie to the criminal and give up my ability to protect my family, because I was afraid of retaliation.

The lie to the criminal was that my briefcase contained my school papers, but it really contained a gun. (This was my briefcase that in reality, not dream, was given to me by my parents I believe, which I used when selling real estate, which occurred only about a year, so later I did fill it with school papers & other items which set me on a more sustainable path).

Back to the dream: I eventually had to tell my son that the story about building the park was a lie, and I was forced to tell it because I was afraid of the criminal retaliation. My son then became bitter and angry and rejected me.

After awakening from the dream, the feelings of hopelessness and devastation lingered, although I noticed some of the logic of the story line was flawed (it's a dream after all). The dream seemed to give me an emotional insight into the plight of poverty-stricken areas and people.

Before totally awakening, my mind searched for a meaning. The conclusion I perceived was to tell your children to work to help people yes, but tell them, just as important, not to take credit for doing good things for themselves. Of course then, they would ask, "Well what's in it for me if I don't get the credit? That's like being an emotional slave!" The answer is that when you give God all the credit, in return He gives you all the love you could ever need. And that is the last domino.

Now, while writing, I realize that God has already given us that love, but we will not realize nor feel we have it, until we give Him the credit for any good works we do. Taking that glory and credit out of our hearts and giving it to God, opens up an empty space that He suddenly fills with all that love we could ever need, allowing us to finally feel it, the love that He long ago has given us.

The Reappearing Key

I feel I am starting to see the key, by the sheer number of times this concept pops into mind, and appears to be the answer: Give the credit to God, and your heart will not have to create its own punishment-reward system.

Creating this system in the minds of many, may be what is happening in the U.S. today as Christianity loses ground. Part of this key that keeps reappearing is that the best perspective to have is: Do your best => Hope that you were able to help someone => Give credit to God. While in the process of doing your best, keep in mind to be a good ant (previously discussed) and jump in with both hands and don't be afraid to get them dirty, because you are helping. The heart can get behind this.

No Rabbit Trails

Once you adopt the perspective that you give credit to God instead of creating your own humiliation to stay humble, you begin to see where certain conversational rabbit trails lead, and can avoid those to avoid humiliation. Then, you help yourself in order to better help others.

Avoiding the Mechanics of Self-Destruction

What are The Mechanics of Self-Destruction? I think it involves control by the Self-Based Heart (destructive

shadow self) instead of the God-Based Heart (constructive shadow self). So the way to go is to surrender to God, practice knowing that you deserve what God has for you, which could be anything, not the unfair limitation your self-based heart has decided you deserve.

The tendency is to slip from the God-Based Heart back to the Self-Based Heart without realizing it. So, your task is to do right in whatever God gives you, rags or riches or in between, but do it based on the God-Based Heart, not the Self-Based Heart. By practicing the surrender of your heart to God, it diffuses the bomb located in your chest (reference to the 2002 film "Impostor").

So why is there this slippage back into the Self-Based Heart? Maybe it's that the Heart in general tends to grieve for the loss of an innocent, and it considers itself an innocent, which in a way it is, like a puppy who automatically thinks that biting means playing, but has to learn to give up that innocent, playful behavior. Yet the puppy finds she is ultimately rewarded for this change, though she has no way of expecting this will happen.

The head must guide the heart to know, the innocents go to heaven. When we give up some of our child-like thought patterns, I believe God takes them to Heaven. I believe He takes a lot of stuff we are not aware of, and processes it for our good, in ways we can not comprehend.

Due to You

Another simple prayer the heart may find easier to feel: Dear God let me give the credit where credit is due, give the credit to you.

Known or Unknown

There are different ways of helping, including where the helpers as well as their acts are known or unknown by any person, or the acts are known but not the helper, or even where the helper is known but not the act. But what is far more important is that all the credit be given to God.

The Glory Burden

The glory that comes your way when you have done something really well, is actually a burden, if you look at it right. It's a relief to get it off your shoulders and send it up to God.

Don't Gloat

Simple language the Head can tell the heart: It's ok to be right, just don't gloat about it. Give credit to God. You must let go of the childish.

The Judge

If the internal self-judge should sabotage anything, it should sabotage the evil ways. The trouble is the judge is discerning which ways are evil. Remember, he's in government so his ham-handed approach is likely to knock down the good as well as the bad.

Be hyper-aware of feelings, take a step back from them and identify which ones are selfish, and which are helpful, so the judge will know. The internal self-judge is often guilty of using the "shouldn't have got out of bed today" theory of what leads to wrongdoing, which is an example of how a child-like oversimplification leads to false beliefs.

Lord help us and our internal judges to discern which of our efforts are good on balance, and to allow for the imperfections that will be there because we are human, knowing those imperfections are sins. But the judge needs to let our good efforts go forward, that we should get out of bed and make effort to do good, and focus on minimizing the inevitable bad, but not dwelling on the bad and wallowing in guilt to the point that it impedes our good efforts.

The internal judge should not sabotage or stop the progress of the self altogether, should not hand down that jail sentence like a coach driver stopping the horses altogether. But he should rein in the horses so they function properly, handing down a restraining order to the heart so that it works with the head, a mutual trust and trustworthiness, for the benefit of both. The key to this is giving God the credit because credit intoxicates the heart. Instead, the heart's fuel must be the Lord.

What's Next

There are at least 3 main outlook, viewpoint, and attitude changes that I believe are essential:
1) I don't know what God has next;
2) I don't expect nor feel owed anything from anyone;
3) I desire to help others.
(April, 2021)

The Punisher's Stage
Maybe one of the purposes of the internal self-judge and punisher is the purpose of being remembered as a threat or consequence of when I do not "Give it up to God". Indeed, God has used His enemy as a part of His plan for us to learn what He has planned for us to learn. So, do the work - pray to God that you give up the credit to Him, everything to Him. And then the punisher has no place to act. (7/25/21)

Not People
Serve God, surrender to God. Serve people, but don't surrender to them. (11/7/21)

Whatever God Has
Many of us are born with, at least the capability for this thought pattern: "I deserve suffering." It may be epigenetic, flipping on like a light switch in certain situations, and may be partially learned. And of course some people have a much greater capability for this dire thought pattern than others. I think it is probably genetic because it keeps the vast majority of us from being so selfish that we would hardly survive as a species.

But like most everything else a human does, it has been overdone at times. There are those who believe in the back of their minds that suffering itself is the goal, even if they don't realize it in the front of their minds. They may feel they just keep shooting themselves in the foot. Or if they are a little more in tune with their subconscious, they may feel there is a shadow there that seeks to sabotage them and bring them down.

Now enter Christianity. If a person truly has Christianity injected or downloaded into their heart, the heart now feels many new things. Among them is a mission to do good. Another is knowing that God's Will prevails, and we don't always know His Will on everything.

So, while performing our mission, we must be ready for anything. In other words, Christianity comes in and faces your old "I deserve suffering" thought pattern and says no, you deserve whatever God has for you in this world, whether it be suffering or pleasure, or both, or anywhere in between. God may have it scheduled for you to receive a lot of money, and for you to use it in your mission. Or He may have it scheduled for you to live in poverty, and for you to use that situation in your mission.

So don't assume you always deserve suffering. Instead, you deserve whatever God has for you, and to use it, thankfully, in your mission. (12/31/21)

Different Answer
At the end of that movie "The Grey", the man asks God to help him defeat the wolf. There is no apparent answer from God in the movie. In real life, I think when we expect a certain type of answer from God, we might not get it. But He will sometimes give us the will to fight. (9/30/22)

Overconfidence, Guilt, and the Sabotager
I like using the made-up term "sabotager" instead of "saboteur" because it seems a little more hard core and hits harder at the imagination. Anyway, I have written about "the sabotager within" elsewhere in this document but there is one thing that becomes increasingly clear: The more you focus on God being number one, the weaker the sabotager becomes. It seems counterintuitive in a way because you would think the thing to focus on is asking God to take the sabotager away. But here's the football image that becomes clearer every time:

The quarterback hands me the ball. To my right is *overconfidence*. To my left is *guilt*. The sabotager is right in front of me.

I run straight up the middle with an intense focus on thankfulness to God, for protecting our souls forever, for always being honest since He is the creator of all that is and all that happens, and thus the creator of truth; He works all things for our good in ways that our human minds lack the capacity to understand. And thankful for so much more.

I'm not getting sidetracked by other thoughts. I keep my eyes on thankfulness, gratitude to God, and keep my mind on the goal just up the field. Then the feeling that God is in command, seeps in, and it's a feeling of humility, so *overconfidence* has been blocked. Now I can run to the right. I slipped past the sabotager, but he is still after me.

I have a feet-on-solid-ground respect for God that he could make things turn on a dime so my duty is to be Biblical in whatever situation I find myself, feast or famine, or anywhere in between.

When this is going on in my mind, I don't have much if any *guilt* because I am so focused on God being number one that my mind mostly won't get sidetracked into any self-centered thoughts, knowing that Jesus took the punishment so I can stay on track making good and right efforts, and continually giving God 100% of the credit for those good and right efforts and accomplishments. *Guilt* has been blocked. Now I can run left, eluding the sabotager again, and in for the score.

But the game's not over yet. The one thing to focus intently on is that the Lord God is number one and I am thankful to Him. God gave us the ability to second guess things at times but this is not the time. (11/1/22 with significant edit **1/1/26**).

Analysis

You shouldn't have to distract yourself to keep from over-analyzing the spiritual things. The spiritual things are mostly matters of simple faith. When you find yourself over-analyzing them, don't just distract yourself. That puts a band-aid on the problem. Instead, realize that it is a fruitless endeavor both to over-analyze and to distract, and make a very conscious effort to operate by faith, not over-analysis. (Some analysis is ok. Humans tend to over-do or under-do even the most useful concepts, ruining the results in the process.) (10/21/22)

How to Get Grateful

I have written in this document that the key to peace of mind is to be grateful to God. However, often I just don't feel it.

The head must start the process, saying to yourself "I am grateful to God because…" Then start thinking of the reasons: God protects our souls forever; He created everything that IS, therefore He is always honest with us; He is the only one who can cause good to come from everything. If you are not in pain, be grateful for that. Be grateful for your loved ones, who are here and who are in Heaven. Be grateful you can help others and show love to them. Be grateful for God's guidance telling your heart that it is Him, not you that is in command and caused good things to happen to you.

Be grateful that God has taken the inner sabotager out of you, taken the inner judge, jury, and jailer out of you, so that you don't have to micromanage your wildly fluctuating overconfidence and guilt. Be grateful that God is in your mind now where overconfidence, overdone guilt, and self-sabotage once were.

Be grateful even when your gratefulness is not perfect - Jesus says "It's okay" because you desire to keep Him in your heart. And while you are listing these things, visualize them and feel them. Feel that God is everywhere. And keep listing and feeling as long as you can. Your heart will eventually follow as your head guides it by the hand. During this process, you will feel the inner sabotager disappear. Will it come back? It may, during your imperfect human life. But practicing this process frequently will render you better able to deal with it. (3/12/23)

Three Ways

We think of how powerful God is, and we pray, asking him for blessings and thanking him for blessings. We may thank Him for specific things in our lives, such as the birth of a new family member. But we don't often dwell as we should, on the over-arching umbrella of general ways that He shows His love for us. There are at least 3: He protects our souls forever, He makes good come from everything, and because He created everything that is, He is always honest with us. (8/8/23)

Gradual Reveal

The Lord has already decided. We're just finding out, one day at a time. (10/7/23)

God & Phone

Christianity is not for everyone, just the way i.o.s. won't run on an android. (5/15/23)

Yahweh
It's either my way, the highway, yo way, no way, or Yahweh.

Ramp Up
Many of Jesus' parables, including "the lost coin", show that we should ramp up our thankfulness to unheard of levels. And with the natural response to thankfulness being helpfulness, we should then ramp up our helpfulness accordingly. 9-4-24.

Other Way Around
After feeling the relief of forgiveness, then feeling humility, don't dwell further on the self, for this leads to Id & Superego over-reactions. Instead, focus on others, which leads to helpfulness. And your helpfulness is not the cause of your salvation, but instead is an effect of it. 1-13-25

Don't Lose It
The Bible is full of instances where the people kept going to worship services thinking they were doing right, but over time actually lost the deeper intensity of the heart-felt meaning of God's word, which has now become Jesus' teachings, which people still lose from their hearts while retaining it in their lips. Jesus gave parables that warned against losing intensity, such as the parable of the lost coin. 3/10/25

Sequence of Events
Most people are wired for their hearts to believe and to act on this proper sequence of events:
God loves you.
God helps you (His forgiveness took away your crushing guilt and will allow you into Heaven).
You love God.
You are humbled by all this.
You want to be helpful to others.
You go and help others (And you take care of yourself so you can continue to help others).
God sends you a good feeling because you have helped others.
God's love keeps fueling you to help others (Otherwise you would eventually run out of fuel to help others).
4-6-25

Adrenaline vs God
Surrender to God is a better way to happiness than self-directed adrenaline trying to make it happen. It's better for your cardiac health as well. Previously I have made fun of the phrase "It is what it is" as being an oversimplification. But it does exemplify what is today called "mindfulness", although for millennia it was known as "surrender to God."
Also, when trying to get something to happen:
Keep in mind "God may allow me to do this" vs. "The power of my adrenaline will allow me to do this". Also keep realizing that if God doesn't allow it, then it's His will I accept, vs. blamimg of self for failure if adrenaline fails. 8/11/25

Turn Up the Small Voice
I've gotten to where I can instinctively give a microphone to that small inkling that feels like "You're losing your humility." So I stop & give thanks to God & it then sends me into praying for us all. Humility returns. 9/28/25

Which Are You?
The writings of one religion tell its followers to thank its God and then go force others to accept its God. The writings of another religion tell its followers to thank its God and then go help others, including to "rescue them from the hand of the wicked." Of course, there are many exceptions to this rule. But this is the general pattern,

reflecting different aspects of human nature: Offensive and Defensive. 10.24.25

End of Sub-Section “Surrender to God”

Credit to God

Godspeed

Godspeed is given to you when you feel forgiven, which in turn relieves you of the overdone guilt and self-second-guessing that slows you down. It is the mechanism whereby Christianity psychologically speeds up your ability to make decisions, unencumbers your mind when you feel you are sending up all the credit and glory to God, so you don’t have the responsibility for managing your easily deflatable human ego. Your mind is then free to focus on quality decision-making.

There are different places where the Godspeed mechanism can get hung up. One is when we gradually lose sight of our gratitude, and lose sight of Jesus work that says “It’s ok to have an imperfect gratitude, you are forgiven for it”. When we lose sight of this, the inner sabotager gains strength. We should not punish the self, but instead go forward with natural desire to do good and right things, grateful but with imperfect gratitude, imperfect yet with perfect forgiveness from God.

In pursuit of Godspeed, which to me is moving rapidly doing the work of God, it is important to remember

that to those of us with an oversized conscience, which can slow down Godspeed with too much self-doubt, it is important not to say “To heck with right and wrong, I’m just enjoying moving fast”, but instead begin moving fast in whatever you do, and say “God is number one”. This helps you avoid taking the credit for when you do something right as you move rapidly, because when I do something right, it’s God; when I do something wrong, it’s God causing me to learn something.

In short: One way of being able to move quickly is to constantly off-load the credit to God when you do things right, because you cannot handle the weight of that credit. And when you do things wrong, hand God the load of thanks for your forgiveness, and keep moving.

May God and not pathological mental narratives be in the driver’s seat of our conscience, so that we are blessed with genuineness and Godspeed, and not held back by a faulty judge, jury, and punisher. When we accept that God is in that seat, it allows several thought pattern adjustments:
Don’t be afraid to get your hands dirty.
Don’t suppose you know what God has planned.
Don’t overthink it. Just serve, and then exit gracefully.

Conscience
Giving the credit to God, unlocks the brain of the person with a conscience.

Shift to Thankfulness
When trying to shift my prayers from asking God to thanking God, it is difficult to thank him for all the hard lessons He had us learn, but we must do it. Also, many times a day we should be thankful for these 3 things:
1. I’m not in hell!
2. I’m not going to hell!
3. I’m going to Heaven!

Glory, Love
Whatever you do in your career, if you do it in an unselfish way, shunt every drop of that glory up to God, then He will cause you to feel good and full, based on the love He gives you.

Imperfect Surrender
Dear God, as we give up our sins and the internal judge, jury, and punisher, and also give up the glory that is really yours, please take as much as possible. Being an imperfect human, I know some of this will remain, but please minimize it as small as possible, so I can do as much good as possible.

Hand vs. Hammer
God use me as a tool. But when the hammer thinks it is the hand, there is an identity problem. Please keep me from slipping into this invalid assumption.

Credit & Comfort
When you have that feeling that you are doing something pretty well, but it seems strangely uncomfortable, give the credit to God. Then He will send you comfort. OR, if you feel uneasy about taking the credit for doing something good, let the credit go up to God. He will send you a relaxation. Sometimes when people thank me, I say “Thank you and I’ll give the credit to the Lord.”

The Good Heartburn
God please help me to keep the stove pipe clear, so that we can surrender all the bad stuff up to you, like so much smoke, allowing the sacred fire to keep burning in our hearts, and so you may dispose of the bad stuff or transmute it into good, as only you can. And with that bad stuff let us send up to you any glory that we might sinfully hold onto for ourselves, when we have the feeling that we should get the credit for doing something right.

To The Extent

I can believe in myself to the same extent that I return the glory up to God, and let go of my selfishness.

To The Extent, part 2
Many great people, including Bear Bryant, have given us the advice: “Believe in yourself”. But before that can happen, I find this to be true: To the extent I am open to God’s direction, I am free to believe in myself. (Substack 3/12/23)

The Main Door of Opportunity
The only thing I have going for me is when I give it all up to God.

Counterintuitively
Never ever give up – except to God. We should give up to Him our sins, so that he can dispose of them. We must give up the credit for when we do good things, which is rightfully His. But when we give up this credit, our human minds tell us our self-esteem will deflate and we will feel empty. Counterintuitively, what actually happens is that we feel more full of happiness than before.

Counterintuitive prayer
Short version of the “counterintuitive” prayer, that can be prayed in a group: Lord when we take the credit for doing good things, we instead should give it up to you. Counterintuitively then, we are not emptied out but instead we are filled, with that good feeling which is the love you send us.

Feet on Solid Ground
When feeling just a little too good, you don’t have to knock yourself back down to reality. Just give the whole thing, all the credit, up to God and you will easily find your feet back on the ground.

Nagging
Regarding that nagging feeling that something is just wrong: One simple solution that keeps popping up is: give the credit to God.

Thrill and Rush
Go for the deep satisfaction of doing right, not the rush and thrill of immediate gratification. If you feel a thrill rush going on, see it as a red flag to step back and review. Avoid the rush. When something right happens, send the credit to the God, because our minds cannot handle it properly.

Gratitude
Criminals are thankful when they are not caught. We must be thankful for the right thing - protecting the innocent: God protecting us, as well as our ability to protect the innocent in concert with God.

Redefining the Self
One who feels he is sadly losing a part of himself when giving the credit to God, should redefine himself.

Degree
You will receive a deep satisfaction and sense of relief in your mind, to the same degree that you give God the credit for when you do something right. And when you do something wrong, God has allowed it for a reason only He can understand, so that we must simply trust, His judgment.

Genuineness
If I were to go back in time and tell my 20 year old self one thing, it might be this: When you have that feeling during conversations that you don’t have to prove yourself, that everything is going to be alright, then this is a time where people are probably perceiving that you are more genuine, and they are more likely to appreciate your efforts (which in turn you can credit to God). When you are young you may often feel that you do have to

prove yourself, but this “giving up the need to prove myself”, is actually a way of proving that you are not selfish.

Humility, credit to God
I cannot maintain humility, unless I give the credit to God.

Confidence
The extent to which I give God the credit is the extent to which I am confident in my own actions.

Feeling
The degree to which I give God the glory is the degree to which I feel well.

Pride
If you pride yourself on doing something well, that is where you’re messing up – priding yourself. Give the credit to God. He fills you with the feeling of His love, in the place where the pride was dwelling. You had His love before, but pride prevents you from the full feeling of it.

Satisfaction, service
Most people are built so that they require two wings to carry them forward to happiness: One is helping people, the other is giving the credit to God. And where’s the self-satisfaction in giving it all up to God? There is none. That’s the beauty of it. God gives you a satisfaction that is not self-based.

Conscience
In order to balance your conscience, you don’t have to expect that anything will go wrong, just give credit to God when things go right. And when things go wrong, give credit to God for ultimately making something good come from something bad, beyond our knowledge and understanding.

Need and Gratitude
Sometimes I get a nagging feeling that my relationship with God is too shallow. I need to ask: Am I going deep enough with God today? Could I go any deeper? And how do you go deeper with God? In either needing Him or Thanking Him, we realize how bad things are, or could be. So our motivation seems selfish, but God has set it up so that it is a good thing to need Him. And we should bear in mind, that things could turn on a dime, so we don’t assume we know 100% of His plan.

Satisfaction
Sometimes the very second you think you really know what physical world blessing God is about to give you, it doesn’t happen. So the real truth is you don’t know. This could be like un-biting the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, although it must be done over and over, as long as we are in the physical world.

Related to this, I have often prayed with my family: “Lord let us give the credit to you when we do something right, knowing that instead of being emptied out, you fill us with that good feeling.” But it seems to me now that this “knowing” of a physical world good feeling reward, prevents me from fully giving Him the credit. So I must give credit to God for the good things I do, not knowing whether I will be filled with that good feeling, or satisfaction, but instead simply and bravely doing it because it is right, yet not knowing at the time whether I have done so properly or not.

The ego is such that it can take some credit for itself and not tell us. Parts of the brain do some things the other parts are not aware of. The only sure reward is not in the physical world.

God help us to give credit to you, not as a means of receiving a good feeling worldly reward, for when we do that, there is no reward. And help us to see when we slip into sin, for it is not always readily apparent.

In short: Give the credit to God for when you have done something good, but without expecting any worldly reward, not even a satisfaction in your mind; for when you do not expect it is when it will be more likely. Expect no reward for the human. It’s like playing football in the dark. You know if you make a TD, you will get

the reward. But, in the dark you don't know if you have crossed the goal line until the reward comes. So we don't know if we have properly given the credit to God, until the reward comes. The true test is: Did you receive that spiritual satisfaction? So we cannot even expect that we will cross the goal line, nor that we even crossed it on the last play, until the satisfaction has come.

This is all regarding the worldly deeds we do. But we can expect the spiritual reward of entering Heaven because we believe Jesus' sacrifice allowed us to be forgiven, which is required before any of us may enter the perfect place of Heaven.

3 Ways

One of our tasks is to strive to uncover the reasons to be thankful to God, in other words, to bring our hearts into reality. We should be thankful because He loves us, and in turn here are 3 ways He shows His love: (1) He protects our souls forever. (2) He created all that truly exists, therefore He is always honest with us. (3) He makes good come from everything. (10/14/22)

Newton's Third Law

For every action, there is an equal & opposite reaction. This notion has been used and misused in economics & many other fields. But spiritually, in can mean that since we humans are imperfect, we don't get to go to the perfect place. However, another equal & opposite reaction is available to us. If we believe Jesus paid that terrible price for our imperfections, we may enter the sinless place. (10/23/23)

Automatic

The Salvation Gift - How am I supposed to respond to it? Not with the self-congratulation of the Id, not with self-destruction by the Superego for feeling unworthy. You should respond with Thankfulness that automatically leads to Humility then Helpfulness. So if the desire to be Helpful does not happen pretty quickly, then the Id or Superego is involved and the Head should stop the action, put the Heart in time-out, to sit and think until real Thankfulness is felt. This is a spiritual practice and you can get better at it. People are helpful for different reasons but the main reason should be Thankfulness to God. 12-11-24

Ways of Saying that God Saved Us

Here are a few of these ways, to use in prayer because the heart perks up and pays attention when some new and interesting words are used, but especially if these words convey the avoidance of something horrible, a huge gift that is so big we can't totally understand it.

God thank you from saving us from an eternity in unspeakable torture and pain in the afterlife.
God thank you for locking in our certain future into comfort with you.
God thank you for your gift so incalculable that we cannot fully comprehend it.
God thank you for granting us a future of unimaginable comfort that is beyond our understanding.
God thank you for forgiving us so that guilt and regret don't completely cover us over.
God thank you for relieving us of any sense of crushing debt to you, so that we can humbly move forward into being helpful without being bound by self-loathing.
God thank you for making us so that we get a warm feeling from selflessly helping others, allowing us to retire the childish urges to feel good from selfish actions.
3/10/25

Up To You

God we send it all up to you:
our sins so you can transform them or dispose of them;
the glory that we sometimes hog but that is rightfully yours;
the gratitude for saving us from a future in hell;
so that every day we can unbite the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Rock Star

It's rare that a kids' role model comes along with only the power of words, and like a rock star, makes kids say "I want to be like that!" It's a way the kid can let his heart feel good, being well liked by many people or being outspoken for fairness. Yet, that role model should place emphasis on doing right regardless of being liked.

The heart should feel good about doing right regardless, not about being liked by others. And that role model should say that a big part of doing right is giving credit to God for the His gifts to us.

With media being so divisive today, I would say kids need to listen to people in the full context of their presentations, because editing is used like never before to deceive, and might remove the "credit to God" context that the role model included, which is essential for the message to be complete.

(9.17.25)

Automatic

At least once a day, sit and try to imagine how bad hell is.

This deepens our thankfulness to Jesus for going there, so we don't have to.

Then, when grateful to God, many people automatically feel an indebtedness to God.

But we can't possibly pay God back.

He says, "There's no debt. Just do what you can, imperfect as it may be, to follow the Bible." 9.22.25

One Indicator

One way I can tell that I've got a good undercurrent of gratitude to God, is this: During everyday activities, instead of thinking "I'm making this happen & I'm sure of what's going to happen next", instead I think "God's making this happen & only He is 100% certain of what will happen next." 9.22.25

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Above Water

There are several things that seem to increasingly deepen as well as increasingly connect in my mind as I practice them.

It starts with imagining how bad hell could be and this increases my gratitude for God saving me from it.

Then imagining how comfortable Heaven is which increases my gratitude for God allowing me in eventually.

With deepening gratitude, I seem to be more aware of how much God is in control.

This awareness causes the id and superego to be less powerful controllers in my mind.

The id & superego are no longer my primary internal drivers of happiness & discipline.

The ego has a new found objectivity where it can sense to a higher degree when the id is trying to "own" something for its own pleasure, such as the feeling that "I'm great because I have this advantage here", which more clearly now falls under the heading of "selfish".

The ego's newfound objectivity also allows it to sense when the superego is trying to be the internal judge & jury that sabotages the self for allowing any selfishness to rise up from the id.

This new objectivity allows me to feel these warnings: If I suddenly feel "I'm special" & "I have an advantage on this" (likely from the id), or "I know what's going to happen" (when we really don't because God writes the script, & if it turns out like we suspected, we should be grateful to God for allowing us a glimpse at probability instead of "I predicted that"), as well as "I'm trash" (likely from the superego), or "I need to pull this situation" to one way or the other instead of keeping the door open for God to guide me on what to do.

The weak ego now becomes stronger since it has become more connected to God, & accepting of God's guidance, as it defers to God in ultimate decision-making.

It feels like my ego finally is "above water", in its proper place as the decider between the id and superego, and the decider of how strong each one should be in any situation.

God's forgiveness allows the ego to reason "Regardless of any sinful selfishness by the id, the self has a clean slate & instead of activating superego to sabotage the self as punishment, the self should be more humble and grateful that I can get back on the Biblical path & help others.

God's forgiveness also allows the ego to say "Regarding any seemingly good fortune that God has placed on my plate in this physical world, the superego should not sabotage it out of a warped sense of fairness, but instead should allow the self to use this good fortune to help others knowing that the good fortune comes ultimately from God & not by any micromanaging by any part of the self.

For example, I can interact with people verbally, keeping in mind that God will connect with the ego & give the right verbal filters for id & superego, and accept whatever happens, instead of a disconnected weak ego allowing id & superego to try to micro-manage the situation one way or the other.

If any self-serving ideas pop up, the ego is now aware enough that it can ask "Yes but would that be helpful?" and then decide based on whether it is or not, instead of deciding based on an impulse from the id.

To summarize, Thanking God (giving God the credit) is like filling up my tank at the gas station. Then I'm able to drive down the right road and see what's real, instead of sitting there with an empty tank imagining what's down that road. As these concepts become clearer and more second nature, of course I should thank God even more, instead of allowing the id the latitude to feel that I'm more special than someone else. And with that comes the feeling that since God is in charge, He could change things on a dime, and I should always respect that. I'm just here to follow the instruction book, and God will give the id and superego both a sense of satisfaction from doing that with the grateful mindset.

This is one of those articles I suspect will be edited as time goes by, but the basic ideas were just blurted out here today.

11/30/25

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Pride Into Guilt

One stumbling block human nature trait is the tendency to claim “I did that” when you do something right. People undermine themselves by hogging this credit & turning it into pride. Then their conscience (if present to any normal degree) turns it into guilt. To avoid any guilt-wallowing, we need to keep working on transferring that credit to God, so we can get back up and continue up the trail. (2025)

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Pain Relief

Pain can be thought of as physical, mental, or spiritual. God uses pain, or the imagination of possible pain, to remind you to turn to Him for relief. That relief may also be physical, mental, or spiritual.

But there may be some cross-matching. For example, you might pray for physical pain relief. But in your case, God may have a reason to grant you relief in your spirit, instead of relief in your body. Since we don’t have the

mind of God, only He knows the reasons for this occasional cross-matching. So we trust that it's for our ultimate good. Interestingly, that trust brings further relief. Then, having received some kind of relief from God, most of us have a natural inclination to be thankful for it.

We've all seen criminals who get caught, and some may cry. We wonder if the crying is from moral remorse or from feeling sorry for themselves for getting caught. Likewise, when they're *not* caught, they might be thankful to their buddy who hid them from the police, or they might have a moral gratitude to God, indicating a possible moral turnaround.

Since we all sin, we're all spiritual criminals. For those of us with spiritual beliefs, a spiritual relief would be forgiveness of the crime. This is possible in Christianity due to the belief that Jesus took all the past, present, and future sins of the believers upon Him, and then paid the penalty for those sins by spending time in hell, so that the believers would no longer be looking at a future in hell.

Thankfulness for this should include our active attempts to vividly imagine the hell Jesus went through, not just the fact we were let off the hook for it. In other words, I'm thankful for my pleasure in relief for not having to go to hell, but also grateful for Jesus enduring that horrible, terrible sacrifice on my behalf, that I can only try to imagine, which ultimately allows my relief.

Now, our thankfulness won't be perfect because we are not perfect. But we're forgiven for that, too. So it's OK to feel this spiritual relief.

(2/27/26)

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(End of sub-topic Credit to God)

God All-Knowing

100%

No one but God knows the difference between right and wrong, or what is truly fair, with one hundred percent accuracy.

Tubular

One great visual analogy that conveys the feeling and even reinforces the depth of meaning of God's guidance, is the analogy of the tube transport, such as when you are at the bank drive-thru and you send your deposit through the tube. In our minds, we can send our sin to God, so He can disarm it in the mysterious way that only He does. We also send through the tube any pride we may feel for our accomplishments, or self-glory, or credit we mistakenly take, because this glory or credit is really God's, and it is a sin for us to hold onto it. In exchange for sending these things to God, He gives us the peace of mind knowing that our accounts are now full.

Another thing we send to God is the knowledge of good and evil. This is equivalent to refusing the Genesis "fruit of the tree" (which we cannot handle as God handles it), equivalent to admitting that we do not know what God will do next in this physical world nor what is really fair, for only God knows this with 100% accuracy.

The Human Illusion of Superiority

Since faith without works is dead, it is one thing to *encourage* someone to do good works, but another thing for a person to *judge* the degree of someone's effort towards good works. Only God knows the degree of a person's effort with perfect accuracy.

Our Limited Understanding

If God is all powerful, and all knowing, and good, then nothing happens without His permission. Therefore, good will ultimately come from whatever happens. This is difficult for us to understand because of our limited capacity to understand, compared to God. Another difficult realization is that apparently it is good that some do not go to Heaven. But I personally believe that God may come to us even in our final seconds in this world to give us a choice, even though He knows how we will answer, and He will not change the situation although He could. This may seem cruel but I submit that it is again our limited capacity to understand God's Big Picture that causes our anxiety with it.

Since God is good, yet evil sometimes happens, the problem is our incomplete understanding of His plan.

Free will and Predestination

I believe in "pre-will": both predestination and free will. "Free will" is how we tend to see things, which is real to us (human-centric). Predestination is how God sees things.

Knowing God's Will

When we stop worrying which side of an issue God's will is on, and just accept the discernment He gives us, that is the point we find ourselves on the right side of it.

Discovery

We vastly underestimate space and time. And we vastly underestimate the possibility of things just as profound, which we have not even discovered. This is because of at least three things. One is our limited senses, a second is our limited imagination, and a third is our tendency to be human-centric. To me, the word "discovered" indicates that a thing was there already, or at least known by God, but it was previously covered from our view; and all we simply did was to dis-cover it. And God is the one who allows this to happen.

Dog and Man

If God is always good, all powerful, and all-knowing, then why does He allow us to feel pain? The answer is that we are not all-knowing, so we will not always know why. Otherwise, we would be Him. Man trying to define God is like dog trying to define man.

Judge Not

The Bible says “Judge not.” In daily life, we must make some judgments, but I believe the Bible’s “judge not” message is that the sin is in thinking we are up to God’s ability to judge. We should have a little healthy doubt in our own judgments.

We Know that We Know Not

One of the most accurate and useful things we can know is that our knowledge of God’s will is imperfect.

False Contradictions

How many facts are there in a meteorology textbook that are not given to us in the Bible? Probably thousands. In the Bible, thunder is described as the voice of God. Yet in recent history, God has allowed us to discover that thunder is also currents of air moving rapidly against one another. If we were to go back 1900 years and try to explain this to the early Christians, I suspect most if not all of them would not believe us. Today, despite what many Christians say, there is scientific evidence of evolution. Now, could God cause two seemingly contradictory things to both be true, simultaneously? With God, all things are possible. Theories of alternate realities such as the multiverse, are only beginning to be explored by humans, as God gradually allows us to better understand some of his creation, of which only He is fully aware.

Definition of Disorder

I was taught that the second law of thermodynamics states that all systems tend towards a state of maximum disorder. Some humans more than others try to prevent what we see as disorder, by managing these systems. However, God’s definition of disorder sometimes differs from ours, since His understanding is complete.

Free Will vs Predestination

The “free will” believer might ask the predestination believer, “Why would you pray if you believe God’s decision has already been made?” The answer is: “Although no analogy I can make is perfect, I will use this one: To me, free will is like the mouse in the maze hoping the scientist will change his mind. I pray because the Bible tells us to pray. The scientist has already decided that the mice who follow the aroma of the cheese will find their way through the maze full of dead-ends, to their reward and will eat. The mice who don’t follow the aroma won’t go on the explorative journey, but they will certainly never find the cheese. However, the mice are incapable of understanding at the level the scientist understands. And I don’t believe God is simply experimenting with us. I use this analogy to illustrate only *level of understanding*, not love. The scientist does not love the mice. But God does love us. This analogy from my human mind has its uses, but is not perfect.”

“A simpler way of phrasing the mouse analogy is this: As the mouse feels he is making choices about which corners to turn based on a cheesy aroma, the scientist is already aware of which turns the mouse will make. To us, it's free will. To a higher power, it's predestination.”

Another part of my reply to the free will believer would be that “Not only is it Biblical to pray, but I desire to pray, and prayer is a part of thanking Jesus for allowing me to one day enter Heaven.”

Relief

The older I get, the more it seems that one of the best mindsets to practice is that of realizing I don’t know what God has next in this world, be it feast or famine, and that I will do right, during either one or in between. Although I don’t claim to be an expert at it, it is the mindset of bravery, and it paradoxically brings an unexpected feeling of relief.

Overconfidence

So often, a sin that comes into my mind is thinking I know more of God's will than I actually know. It is not the words "I know more" per se, but instead a feeling that I know with 100% accuracy what God is going to do next in this world. I may end up being right much of the time, but the 100% figure is not accurate. So, I should respect God's superiority and have some healthy doubt in my own predictions.

God please bless me with the truth, which is the not-knowing, so then I must trust. This is like un-biting the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Adam and Eve ate the fruit, but could not handle it the way God's superior mind handles it.

Lord help me to know, that I do not know, as much of your will as I think I know. And therein lies one piece, of peace of mind.

Emotion

When the heart starts over-producing emotions based on memories of people or objects, that's one way it starts stepping into pockets of miscalculations about what the future holds. With emotions, moderation is key as it is with eating. Part of the remedy to this is to acknowledge that God knows the future and we do not. But also remember one thing that science has shown: Emotions can warp memories.

Roost

Do all things come home to roost? Not always as we think, and we will not always know, because we cannot comprehend God's plan 100% as He comprehends it.

Overall

Sometimes you pay a price for doing the right thing in this fallen world. Sometimes you pay a price for some reason known only to God. But the belief remains that God does it for our overall good.

Children

Are there some things that we are only dimly aware of, that cause us wonder, while God is fully cognizant of these things? Yes. And our dim realization of this phenomenon itself is one example.

Sometime after thinking this, I found that Einstein describes it also, when he wrote "…we are in the position of a little child" compared to God. Of course, Jesus said we are God's children, but many think this just means God will take care of us. I think Jesus just as strongly meant that our *level of understanding* is that of a child, compared to God's understanding of everything.

Fair Double Standards?

Many Christians operate under the mistaken, unspoken, and unacknowledged assumption that we can understand fairness the way God understands it. The truth is, the only fair double standards are those between God and us.

Tool & Hand

When doing God's work, we are the tool, not the hand. The tool should not think it is the hand.

Trust

To use an old saying, "the more you know, the more you know you don't know", I add, "so the more you trust God."

Flexibility

Out of all the things I've written in these notes so far, a few keep re-emerging as increasingly profound. One is the need to be ready for anything, feast or famine, because God's plan can turn on a dime, one way or the other. Don't expect you know His plan for you in this physical world, even minute to minute; just be ready to do right and get your hands dirty in the process, whatever happens one minute from now. And through it all, be thankful God protects your soul forever. This mindset also helps keep you from being overconfident and from doing all this unwarranted supposing, that frequently leads to a bunch of wasted time.

As God
The height of hypocrisy is to say or even imply that we understand as God understands.

Predestination
The Lord wrote my drama script a long time ago. And every day I read it for the first time during my performance. (4/6/21)

Faith vs. Expectation
I've heard people say "I have faith that God will solve my car problems." I think that's more of an expectation than a matter of faith. I don't have "faith" that God will do a specific xyz in this physical world. Instead, I hope and pray that He will. I don't 100% "expect" that He will, because that's like saying we are tapped into what He will do in this world in the future, which would require the mind of God, which we do not have.

Instead, I have faith that "in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

I have faith in many things in the spiritual world, learned from our God-given instruction manual. In fact, I think some things Jesus said pertaining to the spiritual world, have been misinterpreted to be pertaining to both the physical and spiritual.

For example Jesus said "If you ask anything in my name I will do it" (John 14:14). Jesus was not saying "Ask for anything under the sun and say my name after it and you'll get it." He was talking about anything He stood for. And He gives us a clue about what He stands for: "…not as the world gives do I give to you" (John 14:27). (June 2021 with significant edit **1.2.25**)

The Only Plan
Lord you give us the perception of free will, but you have our every move and thought planned out. You have planned for some of us to ask Jesus into our hearts, to pray, to make efforts to do good and right things regardless of the opposition, to give thanks to you, to put you first in our minds, to hold the door to our hearts open so your light will continue to shine in. Help us to feel the desire to strive to do these things, and in the process we will humbly know we are the ones you chose to bless with your plan. (5/20/22)

Realization
Lord help us to come to realize at least some of your vast wisdom. (7/18/22)

Why?
Why would God have us pray and ask for things when He already knows the outcome? To teach us humility in the best way possible. And God knows the best way for each of us. (1/31/23)

Irony
It's ironic to us that one reason God brings us into this physical world is to learn that the physical world is not as important as the spiritual world. 11.11.25

Science to Christianity
One of the pillars of modern science is empiricism, meaning that knowledge comes from observation and experiment, not from assuming we already know the truth. Admitting we don't know everything can lead an atheist into agnosticism, which might eventually lead some to Christianity. 12/28/25

Christian Disagreement
There are different interpretations of the Bible, so there are different Christian denominations, and differing beliefs within each denomination. At age 68, I'm still learning about some of the disagreements between Biblical scholars.

There's no clear answer in the Bible to all the questions we humans come up with. But any *frustration* arising from this fact, is a human problem, not a Bible problem.

Also, Christians may differ on free will vs. predestination, or what Jesus' spirit did during the 3 days after His crucifixion, and other things. But I don't believe these differences *disqualify* us from Christianity.

I think one reason God put us in this world is to learn, and one thing we should learn is that many of these questions or beliefs debated among Christians are not worth us being at odds with one another. We can still hold beliefs where there is no universal Christian consensus, but we should not go into condemning other Christians for disagreeing with us on them.

We need to focus primarily on our common belief that Jesus paid the price for the sins of all Christians, so that we may enter heaven when the time comes. (3/14/26)

End of Section "God All-Knowing"

God All-Powerful

(This section especially contains a lot of repetitive ideas, as I tried out different wording over the years. My hope is to find the best wording and eventually condense it.)

Take Control vs. In Control
There is no "Letting God take control", there is only "Realizing God is in control".

Mind-Body
There is a huge sense of relief, even in my chest, when deeply realizing that God is number one.

When to Be Grateful
When your heart learns to be grateful whenever God's will is done, it will be in constant gratitude. Because as hard as it is for some to admit, nothing happens without all-powerful God's permission. We just don't always know why, because His plan is too complex for us to totally comprehend. So we must just trust.

Human Christian Hypocrisy: First Thoughts
One reason some people don't come to church is they see a hypocrisy. We must overcome this hypocrisy by admitting that God allows evil, for the purpose of ultimate good, for reasons we do not have the ability to understand. Since we cannot understand, we must trust Him. The first example I can think of is that God allowed the enemy to afflict Job. Also in Genesis 50:20, "you meant it for evil, but God meant it for good".

Human Christian Hypocrisy: Mouse and Dog Analogies

I am convinced that the main reason some people refuse to become Christian is that Christians do not have a good explanation for why God allows evil. If God is all-knowing and all-powerful, and good, then He could have prevented evil and still caused us to be filled with love. After all, He can do anything.

Too often, Christians answer that it's our fault because we make the choice to commit evil. The non-Christian then walks away, seeing a hypocrisy that Christians believe in a God that is good and could have prevented us making these evil decisions in the first place, but did not.

The real answer is that we have free will, and we do not have free will. More exactly, we have the illusion of free will, as a mouse has the illusion that he is choosing a pathway down a maze toward the smell of cheese. However, the scientist knows that given the mouse's instinct, he will choose to follow the smell. The mouse cannot comprehend the bigger picture of what is going on with the scientist, and likewise, we cannot possibly understand God's plan or the reasons for why an all-powerful God allows evil to exist.

Some may say "Well then is God simply experimenting with us?" No, that's not the point of the analogy. No analogy is exact, otherwise it would be an exact account, not an analogy. The point is that we cannot possibly see the bigger picture as God sees it.

Our best response is to simply trust Him, and follow His instructions, like our pet dog does when we take him to the vet for those painful shots. No amount of explaining to the dog can cause him to understand, because he is not capable of understanding the necessary words. So the short answer to the non-Christian is that we are not capable of understanding why God allows evil, we can only trust that God will work the bigger picture for our good (see Romans 8:28). If that doesn't appeal to the non-Christian, he may not be meant for Christianity.

Short version: Only God is smart enough to understand why He does not stop all evil from occurring. And dogs are not smart enough to understand why they get a painful shot at the vet. But some dogs will trust the owner to hold him while this happens anyway.

Even though we tend to abhor the sound of it, evil is a tool that only God can use without sin, like a sledge hammer that tears down a structure before a new structure is built in its place. Yes, God places the sledge hammer in someone's hands, and there is destruction. But those who say "I will purposefully commit evil, knowing that it is God who has allowed me to do it" are playing God, and not following God's instructions given in the Bible. If they do this, then yes, God has allowed it. But this willingness to sin, as opposed to an abhorrence of sin, indicates their souls are likely not saved at this time, and they will eventually endure hell if continuing on this course.

Someone may then ask, "If God is a loving God, why does He allow souls to go to hell?" The answer is that He knows the reason and we are not capable of understanding the reason, at least in this world. I think these straight-forward explanations today would win more souls than the usual hypocritical shell-game explanations.

Dog and Vet Analogy Revisited

I came up with this analogy years ago, somewhere around 1999 I think: The dog getting painful shots at the vet is like humans not able to understand God's ways. His ways benefit us although we are not capable of understanding the process.

But it occurred to me recently that also this is how humans usually define evil: as something that hurts and serves no purpose that we can see. God however is able to see all dots and connect the dots, while our efforts to do this sometimes result in false connections that we mistakenly believe are true. Instead, we should trust God. He is the one who is able to accurately handle the knowledge of good and evil.

Also, the dog analogy goes further when we consider how different dogs may react to that sudden pain. Some may bite the vet, some may even bite the owner, while others endure the pain, trustingly. And it explains the need for the Bible, as a book of instructions for us, not for God.

But I do not want to leave the impression that we should passively accept the possibility of future pain. No analogy from a human being is perfect. God gave us a brain to analyze each situation. Even though the human brain is not always accurate, God intends for us to use it. Understanding all this, as best as we can, requires the knowledge that God has already written our scripts, and at the same time He has given us the feeling of free will as we live out these scripts with no rehearsal.

Incomprehensible

Book idea: “The Lie Some Christians Tell”, about the hypocrisy between two Christian beliefs: (1) that God is all powerful and all knowing, and (2) evil continues despite God’s plan.

The first part is true, the second is not, because if He is all powerful and all knowing, He could eliminate evil this instant. The truth is, we do not have the mind of God, and cannot totally comprehend His overall plan, even to allow evil to continue for a purpose which we cannot comprehend, toward the purpose of working all things for our good (see Romans 8:28).

In this, I would paint a picture of God’s enemy as one who is unwittingly a part of His incomprehensible plan, the enemy who does evil because God does not do evil. The question arises: Is God doing evil since He is allowing evil to exist? No. The scripture is clear (James 1:13) that God does not tempt anyone. This is where we have to admit that we are dumber than God, and we can’t understand it, just like we can’t seem to understand that God caused both creation and evolution. (Don’t understand how this could be true? My point exactly!) There are many scientific facts that God has allowed us to discover over the years, that are not in the Bible.

Overall: God does not sin, but being all powerful, He allows sin to continue for reasons we cannot comprehend, just as our pets cannot comprehend an explanation of their vaccination shots. I wish I had the time to search for and read any written works available with this same view.

Illusory Superiority

You might say, “God wouldn’t allow a person to be murdered, because a loving God would not do that.” You might also say that God is all-powerful. But if you said both of these, you’d be a hypocrite. The truth is, He is all powerful, so nothing happens without His permission. A loving God does allow horrible things to happen that we don’t understand, just like a loving parent allows his/her child to go through some tough things to help them to mature. And the child has no understanding of the reasons behind this, at the time.

You may say “God has limited Himself somewhere along the way” but it is your understanding of Him that is limited, yet you say it is He who is limited, so you may define Him in your human-centric way. Yes, God does not sin, but just as a child might fail to see that tough love is love, we adults fail to see that God can work things in a way that we cannot. That’s one reason He is God and we are not. When we murder, it is a sin, but when God allows it, He is using it for ultimate good in a way we cannot understand.

You might ask, “Then why should we punish a murderer if he is carrying out God’s plan?” Again, we are not able to work things as God does. If God could trust us to work things as He does, it would be like humans trusting our pets to drive our cars. We do not define ourselves exactly as our pets define us, and God does not define Himself exactly as we might attempt to define Him. We are the ones with limited understanding. God gave us the instruction book for us to follow, because of our limited capacity. What God follows is his own superior wisdom which we will never totally comprehend, but we should trust.

Human Christian hypocrisy

Genesis 50:20 says “As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to keep many people alive.” This is an example of God allowing something “for good” that we perceive as evil. Many Christians should review this in order to prevent themselves from thinking they always accurately perceive as God perceives. In addition, God allowed satan to afflict Job, with the end purpose of God’s righteous result.

God’s Permission, our Trust

If God is all-knowing and all-powerful, then nothing happens without his permission. We have only to trust that He will make good come of everything He permits to happen.

Avoiding Overconfidence

I think I will start carrying a dime around in my pocket to help remind me that Things can turn on a dime, not to be overconfident of my own predictions, and that God is in charge of things, and works all things for our good.

One Type of Stress Reduction

Please let me stay under the often-correct perception that I do not know much of what God’s will is. When we

don't remind ourselves that we mostly don't know what God is going to do, these layers of responsibility quietly build up in the ego, causing anxiety. So it is a great relief to admit we mostly don't know what He is going to do. I can vouch for the fact that I get better at this, the more it is practiced.

Evolution

Hundreds of years ago, church leaders realized that in order to keep from losing Christians, they had to admit the earth did revolve around the sun. Today I believe we face the next solar system controversy: Evolution. But this must be accompanied by the message that God can make two seemingly contradictory facts both happen in reality. This must also include the example that thunder in the Bible is spoken of as voice of God, but now we know it is also defined as "currents of air moving rapidly against one another". It is both. God allows us to discover some of the science as years go by.

Free Will vs. Determinism - First Thoughts

When the subject of free will vs. predestination comes up, some may say that God is all knowing and all powerful, but that He has limited himself so that we may have free will. I reply that He has not limited Himself, but He has limited our understanding of His plan. It is not for us to completely understand why His plan will unfold the way He has planned it. It is for us to operate in the sense of free will He has given us, so that we may learn what He has planned for us to learn. (See Ephesians 1:11: "In Him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of Him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will".)

Free Will vs. Determinism - In Depth

God has given me a tool kit. In it are: passion, compassion, guilt, and sense of free will, among many others. They must be used properly, and to the proper degree, not over-doing or under-doing. Picking up and using the tool "Sense of Free Will", at the same time I realize fully that God is the author of my actions and has planned out how I will use this tool.

These two beliefs, free will and predestination, seem contradictory to the human mind. But that is the point of God's superiority: Though we are made in His image, He is superior. He is all knowing and all powerful, therefore He has created the future and has given His permission for it to occur as He has created it. Using the Sense of Free Will with the knowledge that God is the ultimate author seems contradictory, but consider this:

__Two Christians are attempting to go about their day doing good and right things.

__Person A and Person B both believe that if they commit a sin during the day, they are forgiven because of Jesus' sacrifice.

__Person A also believes in total free will.

__Person B believes in Sense of Free Will, and God as Author of All.

__When person A sins, his mind goes to guilt, just long enough to guide him to thankfulness to Jesus, and then to a determination to work harder to do right, even knowing he is saved by Jesus, not saved by his own works.

__When person B sins, his mind goes to the same places, but also to an additional place: A calming feeling knowing that God had this sin written into His plan for reasons that often God only knows, but will ultimately transform the sin as only He can do, to make an ultimate good come from it later.

__Person A appears to believe in the oversimplification that since God does not sin, He therefore could not write sin into our daily plan.

__Person B appears to realize on a higher and deeper level, that God is vastly superior and different from humankind, and that an action taken by a human may be a sin, whereas it is not so with God.

__The tree of knowledge of good and evil is an example. God has a perfect knowledge of these things. But once humankind attempted the knowledge, it was a sin. We cannot hold ourselves to the same standard as God. So there is an appropriate double standard between us and God.

__Human death is another example. God causes the human body to die, and He causes an ultimate good to eventually come from it. However, when a human causes another human body to die, it is often a sin, and it says this in the Instruction Manual.

__At this point, person A may ask, "Well then, what is to stop us all from becoming murderers, while saying God will make some good come from it?" My answer is that we would be committing the sin of "Believing we

think like God" to an unacceptable point.
__This may be a fundamental difference between person A and person B: that person A tends to believe God and Christians often think very much alike, while person B believes that the circles in this Venn diagram are much less overlapped.

Forgiveness
There are many facets to forgiveness. One is that we as a forgiver, relinquish the role of the morally superior teacher of lessons, which in reality is God's domain.

Imperfection
God thank you for forgiving me even though my thankfulness is not perfect.

Get Back Up
Thank you God for your forgiveness so we can get back up and go do more good and right things, even though our forgiveness of others is not perfect.

Fear, Expectation
When you don't know what is going to happen there may be fear of the unknown. But when you know God is in control there is not.

Musician and Instrument
I am this great instrument, when performed upon by God, but nothing on my own. The difference is in the effort we make to realize God is performing upon us, as well as the effort we make to follow the Instruction Manual.

Allowing sin
Why does God allow sin to occur? For reasons that we do not know. Otherwise, we would have the mind of God. God is the only one however, who can make good eventually come from sin. When I make effort to realize that my will is already subordinate to His, I can see a little more clearly how He does this, although my vision of His will remains incomplete.

Two Hypocrisies
Two Christian hypocrisies that I believe prevent some non-believers from exploring Christianity are outlined below:

1) Allowing sin

Many people don't believe in God because they see a hypocrisy among Christians, that God is supposed to be good and all-powerful, yet all these horrible atrocities occur. The non-believer rightfully will ask, "Well if God is all-powerful and good, why does He allow this?" Most Christians then weave a tangled tale involving the battle between good and evil, or that God has limited Himself somehow.

Unknown to most of us, the problem is this: Some Christians cannot fathom that there is something beyond their own understanding, that God allows these atrocities for reasons we are incapable of understanding and ultimately makes good come from them, and that we may not understand God's definition of good, as he understands it; and that a good double-standard is one standard for us, and another standard for God. This should be a new message from Christians to non-believers.

2) Allowing Seemingly Contradictory Occurrences

Since my faith (not evidence) is that God is all powerful, I believe He can make two seemingly contradictory things occur in reality; for example, both creationism and evolution. Far be it from me to believe that my species can detect everything. I think God is allowing us to discover these seemingly contradictory things gradually.

For example, after much resistance, the church eventually accepted that Galileo was correct regarding the earth revolving around the sun. Also, in the Bible, thunder is spoken of as the voice of God. Since then, we have discovered that thunder is caused by currents of air moving rapidly against one another. So is it one, or the other? I believe it's both. Those who believe that it must be either creationism or evolution, could be the small

picture thinkers. And I believe further that they cause some non-believers to decide not to explore Christianity.

All Good

Regarding the recent popular phrase "It's all good": I do agree that God is all-powerful, but since this is so, why does He allow evil to continue? The answer is that He allows it to operate for reasons we cannot understand, then ultimately making good come from it as only He can do.

So the truth is that "It's all good", but we should be careful to remember that God has ways of causing good, that we do not have. For example, God, without sinning, causes a person's body to die so that the spirit may go to Heaven. However, if we take it purely upon ourselves to cause a person's body to die simply so that the spirit may go to heaven, that is our sin.

But if God is using us as His instrument in a good act such as removing life support in hospice so that suffering is ended, then we are not simply taking it upon ourselves to play God. There is one standard for us, and one standard for God. As much as we don't like double standards, that is one double standard that is All Good.

Properly Avoiding Overconfidence

How many times in the past have I had this feeling like, "Things are going too well, I don't deserve this." I think it's a mechanism some people have, to keep us from getting overconfident. However, as with so many things, a human can take a good thing too far and turn it into a bad thing.

The better attitude to have is that I deserve whatever God has for me, regardless of whether I think I deserve it or not. My task is simply to be thankful, during feast or famine, and try to do right, and be humble, knowing that God may change things at any time, and that He will make good eventually come from everything, but not knowing what He will do in the physical world. It is this Not Knowing that is like the un-biting of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

However, when we slip back into thinking we know, then we have bitten it again. So it is a cycle, and a struggle. But it is part of the Learning that God has for us.

Why Does God Allow evil?

When asked "Why does God allow evil, especially if He is all-powerful and all-knowing?" Some may reply "He limits Himself, for some unknown reason." I would reply: "Then He would no longer be all-powerful. Instead, I believe it is we who are limited in our understanding of Him, lest we begin to think we are not. So the simple answer is, we don't know why God allows evil, because we are not God. Therefore, we should trust that He will work everything for our good."

Someone may say, "If you believe God can make two seemingly contradictory things occur in reality, then why can't He limit Himself, while simultaneously being All-Powerful?" My answer is that He could. But I don't believe He does, because the Bible tells us that He is All-Powerful. And this simply precludes God being limited.

In the Bible, thunder is spoken of as being the voice of God. Yet God has allowed us to scientifically discover that thunder is *also* "currents of air moving rapidly against one another." The key word is "also." This is different from saying "God is all-powerful and also God is not all-powerful." We are talking about God Himself here, not any of His creations that He might allow us to uncover scientifically from time to time.

Another question is: "Does God sin when He allows us to sin?" An action may be a sin when we do it without regard to the Instruction Manual, or without regard to God's influence in our minds. If we kill a person without the justification of protecting the innocent, then we have at least disregarded the Instruction Manual. But when God allows this sort of thing to happen as a part of His plan, God's action is not defined as a sin, because He will work all things to make good ultimately prevail, as only He can. While we might think we can work things like this, we cannot, because we are not Him.

"All-Powerful" cannot be redefined. But an action may be redefined as a sin, or not sin, depending on whether it was done by a person or done by God.

If someone says, "Well you are indicating God allows evil, and that is not true, because God does not sin." My reply is "True, God does not sin. But He is so superior to us that he can do things that seem like a contradiction to our limited minds." This also fits with my belief that both evolution and creationism are true,

and that God has allowed us to discover many scientific facts through time, while the Bible simultaneously remains true.

Evidence of God
To those who say there is no evidence God exists, I say, you are correct, because evidence is physical. God is spiritual. So I rely on faith, not evidence.

In Hard and Easy Times
Sometimes I pray this prayer, which confirms my belief in predestination as well as my belief that God has given us a sense of free will. It also confirms my belief in God's superior knowledge, power, and goodness which my human mind cannot always comprehend:
Lord I gladly accept what you have for me, and I gladly accept what you have for me to do about it, because you are good, and you make good come from everything, even though I don't always see how this is possible. Thank you Lord for everything.

Material vs. Immaterial
Human thoughts are material because they consist of the electrical and chemical activity in brain cells. Having said that, the human definition of material does change as science advances. If we were to suddenly discover the material that God is made of, I would say that fact in itself would be immaterial, because He is still in charge. (5/7/21)

Choppy Seas
The universe is full of pushes & pulls, so why shouldn't our lives be like that? God makes us strive to overcome some of these forces, and the mechanisms to ensure our strivings are pain and pleasure. (8/28/21)

Debatable
Some people fall victim to this view: "This man is not helping his fellow man! What's fair about that? He should be made to do so!" This short-sighted view ignores (1) that the definition of "help" is often quite debatable among human beings; (2) that God has consequences, beyond our realm of knowledge, in store for those whom by God's definition, choose not to help; and (3) that setting up a society which increasingly controls the actions of people in these debatable gray areas, steps ever closer to playing God. (9/3/21)

Striving
Praying is part of the striving and effort that God has us do, to counter the second law of thermodynamics. To succumb to that law is one definition of death. To counter it is one definition of life. (12/19/21)

Love Physics
I think when you know that God created the laws of physics, and you love God, you also love the laws of physics, which are a collection of truths, as opposed to the "laws of emotion" (which by the way is an oxymoron). (10/11/22)

God Shows
A feeling of love for God might well be bound up with the fact that He loves us and He shows it. Among other things, He protects our souls forever. Also, since He created everything that exists, He is also the author of truth, and therefore does not lie to us. (10/21/22)

Predestination
As believer in predestination, I would like to see a church called "Church of God In Control". (12/10/22)

Meet Again
Out of all the people you have known, there are many who you will never communicate with again in this world. In addition, there are some souls you will meet again in Heaven, and some you will never meet again.

(3/6/23)

Ceiling
When focusing our hearts on the superiority & sovereignty of God, the feeling is that He is big and dominant. I think this is one reason people built churches with high ceilings – with the idea of causing people to feel God's superiority immediately when we walk in there. But of course, high ceilings are not what He is about. (4/21/23)

The Fair Double Standard
God does not sin. Take for example, "Thou shalt not kill". When God decides it is time and then causes someone's body to die, He is not sinning. But when a human decides to kill someone, outside of self-defense, it is a sin. So, we should not be so human-centric to say that causing a human body to die, outside of self-defense, is always a sin. It is a sin when humans do it, but not when God does it. A double standard for sure, but a fair one. (10/6/23)

Resentment
Can you accept what is, without resentment? If you harbor resentment, you believe that things shouldn't be this way. Yes, if you can change it, try. But if there's no way, as in "God is all powerful", then accept His will without resentment. Trust that He has our best interest in mind. 3/26/24

Decline?
Will Christianity decline unless it openly admits that God is all powerful, and therefore nothing happens without his permission? If Christianity widely admitted this, it would also have to admit that God allows evil to operate, for God's own reasons which we are either not intelligent enough to understand, or that we might only dimly understand at times. As well, God is the only one who can turn evil into good. (It might be interesting to see any online discussions about this.) 4-16-25

End of Chapter – God All-Powerful

Guilt

Guilt can lead to self-punishment, so this section also includes quotes on avoidance of self-punishment and self-sabotage. In heart language, this is “Don’t punish self.” Also, many of these notes on guilt were written before I explored further into the psychological terms “guilt proneness” and “guilt complex”.

Signpost
Guilt should be a signpost, not a mud pit. (12/8/20) (substack 1/20/23)

Next Time
Regret is made for teaching you what to do next time. 3/28/23

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Limited Guilt – Hand Tool Analogies

Guilt is like a hammer – it’s ok to hammer in a nail when building your character, but take your fingers out of the way before the last few strikes. (substack 2/2/23)

Guilt has its place, but like most anything, it can be overdone. If someone has a screw loose from their own overconfidence, then guilt is the right sized screwdriver, but there must be caution not to over use it and strip the screw out altogether.

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Guilt vs. Gratitude
Do not punish the self. Instead, reject the thought pattern that needs to be punished, and ask fervently ask God to remove it, leaving in its place a deep gratitude.

Introducing “The Punisher Within”

"The Punisher Within" is a brain pathway that some of us have more than others, an extreme guilt overreaction that seeks to be our own judge, jury, and jailer. Now, some guilt is beneficial as a signpost to tell us what to do in the future. But this extreme version has crossed the line from beneficial to destructive, from good to bad, by taking guilt too far.

Physiologically, it probably involves the right brain hemisphere (the heart) sabotaging the left brain hemisphere (the head). This self-destructive pathway needs to be consistently cleaned out by the deep and daily realization (brain exercise by the head) that God is our judge and jury, we should accept what he has for us and make the best of it, whether riches or poverty, and replace The Punisher Within with Thankfulness to God for our Forgiveness, and a Brave Commitment to Humble Service, so as I have said in prayers with my family, we are able to "get back up and go do more good and right things", and I might add, with God Speed.

One key to the process of putting The Punisher out of commission is constantly giving up any glory or self-credit, to God. Give up this credit, give up this false guilt, this false judge and jury, and give up all other sins, like smoke going up a stove pipe. Then God gives you the oxygen, to keep the sacred fire burning in your spirit.

These are active spiritually-based brain exercises by the head (rational left brain hemisphere), that can cause it to become stronger and to be able to lead the heart (right brain hemisphere) instead of the other way around. Lazily and passively not doing these left hemisphere exercises allows the heart to overcome the head, where the heart grabs the perception-behavior joystick from the head, causing the person to perceive and act through the heart only, while the head is covered by a veil. As you can imagine, this leads to some pretty irrational behavior. Both head and heart are needed in balance.

The Heart of course exhibits good and evil, of different types, in different degrees, at different times, in different people. The Punisher Within is one of the bad guys in the heart who seeks to exaggerate its own definition by convincing the rational Head, or the ego, to define the Punisher as a solid part of the self, which cannot be extricated or removed. The Punisher also seeks to play God, further exaggerating its own definition. It will also exaggerate guilt too far, after you have made a mistake or even when you seem to be doing well, just to keep a glass ceiling over your head that you don't seem to be able to break through.

Now, by way of these 3 exaggerations, the Punisher even has a way of causing you to feel guilt for playing God, when it is the Punisher itself who has done it! Therefore, it is key for the Head to practice removing the veil, in order to see the Punisher as separate from the self. This practice should be daily and frequently, being vigilant for any subtle signals which indicate the surreptitious creeping of the Punisher back towards the self.

(This note was likely written in the late 20-teens, before I explored the idea of the superego turning into the Punisher Within, and the ways to turn it back to its proper role as a Reminder of what to do next time.)

Guilt and Christianity

Christianity has something for most every guilt-feeler. Here are 3 of those things:

1) God is all powerful: High guilt-feelers are necessary in large numbers, in order to have a safe society without having to have a complete police state. In turn, high guilt-feelers may self-sabotage if they don't feel worthy of great success, so for them, Christianity allows the ability to give God the credit for success, and in turn they receive a deep relief that they are not responsible for making or maintaining it, only God is.

2) God is all knowing: This allows the guilt-feeler to simply admit he doesn't know what the future holds in the physical world, only God does, further absolving guilt feelers of their overboard sense of responsibility, allowing a dwelling feeling of comfort.

3) Jesus took the punishment so you don't have to: This allows the guilt feeler to go forward in service, knowing that even when his thankfulness and service is not perfect, he is accepted, and his efforts are appreciated, unconditionally, so there is no point system by which he is judged.

The Inner Self Judge

I think the reason that the inner self judge continues to wield occasional power is that the heart often slips into less-than-humble mode, prompting the inner self judge (heart-based superego) to create a self-inflicted disaster, in order to bring the humility back. However, the head should do the work and consistently provide the heart with memories of how bad things can get, and how God is really in charge, to avoid this self-punishment altogether.

Fully Accepting Forgiveness

I think high guilt-feelers may have a deeper conscience. Having a conscience is a good thing, but going too far and refusing to accept the forgiveness that clears your conscience, leaves you stuck halfway through the process. This is one thing I think that requires harder work from a guilt-feeler.

Submit & Commit

Instead of the Conscience being controlled by Shame and Guilt all the time, it should mostly be influenced by Submission to God and Commitment to God (Submit and Commit). This takes most of the focus off the self-judge (shame and guilt) and places it on God as the righteous judge (submit to God, commit to God). The problem is that the self-judge is over-used. It is also self-centered vs. other-centered, and backward-looking (blame) vs. forward-looking (what to do next time).

Make it the Other

Many of us have a sabotager within. Of course the first step in stopping it is to realize how real it is. Then, realize that you don't have to make it hard on yourself when things are going well. Just have a stronger passion for being humble.

Still, when things are going well, that old self-sabotager might creep in, under the pretense of helping you keep your humility. Open your eyes and stare right at it, and say, "Nope. This time I'm giving this glory all up to God. There's no glory here for you to feed on." And then, actually go ahead and give the glory up to God, knowing that He will send you the huge relief of not having to carry the weight of something you weren't meant to carry anyway. Same thing for anger – open your eyes and stare at it, which then takes it outside your head, so you can see it and deal with it better.

Guilt and Guessing

I think high guilt-feelers are also high self second-guessers, or overthinkers. Second guessing is a mechanism that works well in the proper amount, in the happy medium, in the sweet spot. It assures better accuracy in our daily decision-making. But when overdone, second-guessing goes too far beyond a reasonable conclusion and goes into pseudo-rationalizing and overcomplicating things.

For example, second-guessing may go beyond the simple "Give control up to God" principle and guess "Well if I don't quite give control up to God, then I don't deserve to succeed", when the reality is that God has success or failure planned for us either way, and it is God who decides whether we succeed.

If you tend to like seeking out more details about most everything in general, you may be more susceptible to second-guessing, which can be good, but may also be more susceptible to carrying second-guessing too far, which is something to watch out for.

Avoiding Self-Sabotage

In the past I have been, and still occasionally am, one of those people who self-sabotages when I do something in anger, even when I am right, and even when it is really self-defense and not anger, but the Heart believes it is anger and believes I should punish myself for it, the Heart causing Reason to get its facts wrong (by way of rationalization), setting me up to be the one who is wrong. So, this is all the more reason to get really good at giving up my false sense of control up to God, before all this even occurs. He properly takes care of it, and guides me from there. I thank Him for improving me in this area. One profound motivational aspect of this is to remind myself that the more often I do it this way, the better I can help others.

It is better to maintain your humility by being a good helper and giving the credit to God, than maintaining it by sabotaging yourself. Plus, if you sabotage yourself, it hurts those who depend on you. And hurting others is not the way to be. Let go of any inner narratives or scripts from the past that surreptitiously guide you to sabotage yourself (the inner punisher, inner judge and jury, inner bad parent, etc). First, realize when they are there. If you get good at this, it might even feel as though someone else is there with you. Then ask God to take it now. This frequent practice is essential in separating it from yourself.

Don't hurt or sabotage yourself just because your heart feels that sacrifice is always good. This is a child-like oversimplification. Some of the ways of the child-like mindset must be let go of, and given to up to God. Make your sacrifices count towards helping others, then give any glory that comes from it, to God.

God's Principles
When you live by God's principles, your mind doesn't feel the need for the internal judge and jury.

Wild
Stockholm syndrome is conscience gone wild.

Guilt vs Guilt Feeling
When you accept Jesus, God will 100% absolve you of Guilt. This tends to also remove the Guilty Feeling, and gives you Godspeed in your daily activities, but only to the same extent you give Him the all the credit for anything you do right. This is easier said than done, but is an extremely worthwhile endeavor and practice.

Humility vs Humiliation
In people with a conscience, the heart desires fairness. One of the main types of fairness is "not holding yourself, or your kind, above others": humility. However, the heart, being child-like and overgeneralizing, confuses humility and humiliation, and will settle for humiliation because oddly, it's easier to sabotage the self into humiliation than to give the heart-felt credit to God for when you do something right.

This is because the heart without courage fears it will be emptied out if all the credit goes up to God. But with courage, it can take that leap and discover it is not emptied out at all. Instead it is then filled with all the love you could ever need.

So, you can have nice things, just use them to help people, for example securing your family, and give the credit to God. Of course, being human, you won't ever be perfect at this, but that's why Jesus gave himself: So we could carry on despite errors, with conscience intact, doing good and right things, while occasionally stepping off, then back on, the path.

Build On
Even though we know that self-sabotage is bad, sometimes the heart still sees it as a way of maintaining humility when we reach a high level of success. It is wise then to look at the Alabama football team when they are number one, who has at times excelled on top of excelling, as an example that you can build on what you have already built. But aside from the football analogy, it means you can do even more good things to help people than you were able to do before, always giving as much credit to God as possible, and being forgiven for the rest of it, forgiven for even your imperfect gratitude, knowing it is God, not you, who will decide when to send hardship your way, and to do good in either feast or famine, for doing good is what is emphasized, not the feast or famine.

Accept the Clear
Learn to accept the comfort of a clear conscience, that God offers the humble and forgiven. God really wants you to have it as a gift, even though you will not be perfect in this world.

Exalt
Look out for that subconscious power mechanism that somehow causes you to find subtle ways of putting other people down, before you even realize what came out of your mouth. What makes this happen?

Elsewhere in this document, I've described my personal journey with Broader Autism Phenotype, a weak ego, and low self-esteem leading to a social "self-sabotaging" mechanism.

But here I just want to give a short social reminder: Exalt others whenever possible in your conversations. You do not have to put yourself down in order to lift others up. So, always be exalting others, but not at your own expense. Be glad for the talents of others, knowing that you and they have the same value, in the eyes of God. (~2017 with significant edit **1.5.26**)

Red Flag
When feeling a decline in your passion for doing right, see it as a red flag because the subconscious judge may take over and then sabotage you into humiliation, as a sad and incorrect way of getting your humility back.

Gratitude vs Self-sabotage

"I did a lot of good things at work today." But then, here comes that feeling from the heart that seems to say, "Things are going too well. You're overconfident. We're going to have to come down a notch." It is conscience gone wild. What do you do with that feeling? Ignore it? Sabotage yourself down a notch? The 3rd answer is to analyze it.

In those with a strong conscience, the heart values humility, and will sabotage the self to keep it. Go back to the start. The problem was the first word - "I". Instead, give the credit to God - "God did a lot of good things today, and I'm just thankful He let me be there when He got 'em done." This all may sound trite and boring to some, but the profoundness of it lies in the relieving change of heart in those with a conscience.

Later update on this comment: I was reading this again and remembered I saw a sign in front of a church today that said "Thankfulness is a soil where Pride finds it hard to grow." So, I might add that Guilt finds it hard to grow there as well.

Service vs. Self-sabotage

The Archetype of the Living Gargoyle: How could I make such a stupid mistake in a conversation? I knew better, therefore it must have been self-sabotage, like a living gargoyle flying high above my head, directing my activities at a higher level than I ever imagined. I have two weapons against it. One is prayer, and the other is my bow and arrow. I pray the Lord guides my arrow to hit its mark and remove the gargoyle, revealing the endless blue sky behind it, which represents the Lord, to whom I surrender.

The self-sabotager gargoyle may give you the feeling that he is a guardian, whose righteous purpose is to keep you humble. However, he should be called out as a liar because he sometimes allows the selfish "id" out of its proper boundaries to run wild in selfishness, in order to set up a failure that will cause humiliation.

No, the effective way to simultaneously serve and stay humble is not to be allowed to make a selfish mistake. The way to stay humble is to realize that your passion may be fed no longer on the thrill of extremism, but instead fed on the knowing that you are serving, being respectful and helpful, and that God appreciates your effort. People may also appreciate your effort, but this is less important, and is not necessary.

Worry

If you're all the time worried about what you've done wrong, then that's one more thing you did wrong. Worry indicates that your heart has forgotten the feeling of God being in ultimate control. Remember it and feel it. 7/6/20

Gratitude

I just watched a new version of "A Christmas Carol" on TV. What a compelling story of how psychology and spirituality are intertwined. Just afterward I thought, those of us who are born guilt feelers, who feel we don't deserve nice things, especially when we feel we deserve decay and despair, need to give at that moment, the moment we feel we have nothing left to give, we need to give gratitude to God for all good and right things, and for causing us to do good and right things, even though we are not perfect at it but do make effort.

And when we give gratitude to God, we are not emptied out as we might imagine, but instead filled then with all the love we could ever need, and then able to move forward and give help to others, knowing now our mission is not to simply despair, but instead to help.

Ebenezer Scrooge is an example that people can be drastically changed, fictional though he was, and the real examples are all around us, though we may have undervalued them. We have the ability to see the value of their efforts, and be part of them. (2019)

Forgiveness

Our inborn guiding passion is fairness. If you steal a pack of gum from the store, it's not fair. If you sabotage yourself and lose your job because you feel you're not worthy and someone else needs the job, that's not fair either. You're stealing help from people that you could be giving them by doing your job. Not to mention the pay from your job helping you and your family, who happen to be valid human beings as well.

And the more helpers the better. If you feel you're not worthy because you mess up sometimes, then you are

likely in need of God's forgiveness, which you can get easily by realizing Jesus took the punishment so you don't have to. Then for your over-active guilt tendency (which I think is also mostly inborn), there's a process in place to cap it, to put a lid on it. This is why I believe many are also born with the need for God and His forgiveness.

And some feel guilty for even feeling they are better at something than another person! One: Don't extrapolate this to being a total better person - only God knows our true worth, we are unable to quantify that. We are supposed to simply work with talents he gives us. Two: We may well be better at something. But this allows us to help with that thing, and people do need help with all kinds of things.

Forgiveness vs. Guilt and Mud

We are forgiven for when one foot steps off the path one time, as well as when we wander totally off the path, so we can get back on it and continue moving down it, without having to stop and wallow in a nearby mud puddle, feeling unworthy.

Guilt is a bad feeling in the heart, there to remind you to get back on track, not to drag you down. Remember you are forgiven so you should not be dragged down by guilt on every imperfection. Instead, after a brief time, the ego should turn the guilt volume down so that it becomes a pleasant background music motivator to simply stay on the correct path moving forward.

This is another example of how some tend to dwell, get stuck, and go overboard in terms of past, blame, and shame, while others transmit the same info from heart to head, to logically correct their course going into the future. However, the head and heart will need to recall, as a matter of frequent exercise, how bad things could be, to avoid it happening again. This is why I like the symbol of a dime, reminding me of the old saying that "things can turn on a dime", so be careful.

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Trade Guilt

I have found that among all the different types of people in the world, I am one of the extreme guilt feelers (although this is lessening as years go by). There are theories that guilt evolved in the population to help the group survive (1). But like everything else, it can be overdone.

Christianity helps with this "overdone guilt", by replacing much of it with thankfulness, a commitment to humble service, and a sense of relief that God does not hold us humans to a high standard that we cannot achieve, and so accepts us as we are, an unconditional love. In a nutshell, we trade our guilt for commitment, determination, and resolve.

1. https://cailinoconnor.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Guilt_Games_and_Evolution_Official.pdf

(~late 20-teens with significant edit **1.6.2025**)

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Child and Soldier

What should we do with the misguided innocence in our hearts, that goes overboard and tells us we are bad when we are not, like a child who thinks he is all bad when he has done only one thing wrong? Should it be let go of, up to God, like so many other child-like beliefs, or can that misguided innocence learn not to go overboard, with the head as its guide, showing it the way that the world really is? The answer comes to me as an image, maybe an archetype: the silhouette images of a child and a of a soldier facing a sunrise, the soldier holding a child's hand in his left hand, while pointing up to the right and forward, with his right hand. So, it is the child's stubbornness, misguidedness, or refusal to be guided, that should be let go of. The innocence may remain and function well in conjunction with guidance from virtuous principle.

One thing the heart should know in adults - is to trust the head in complicated matters, because as we grow into adults, we find that real life is more complicated, whereas the heart thinks in simpler terms. It is like a puppy who is learning that playing and biting are not always the same thing, and will be punished until it learns

the more complicated reality that some things are not ok to bite. So, “not always” is a sign of maturity.

The heart may think, like a child, that getting ahead of someone else is always not fair, so its internal self-judge may set about to sabotage the self, to level the playing field. However, the head must help the heart to eventually learn that Person A getting ahead of Person B (depending on how it’s done) may eventually help Person B thru a string of events, motivating them to improve, or helping them to see to change direction, or that Person A who got ahead may contribute to helping Person B from Person A’s advanced position, or a number of other ways that are not discernable by the heart. The heart must simply learn to trust the head when the head says “Putting yourself behind is not helpful.”

So the head must lead the heart, not the other way around. However, the motivation for the head is to protect the innocent heart. So while the head is the leader, the head is also guided by its own principle of protecting the heart. The heart must be nourished and protected, it can’t be just dragged around by the head, into dangerous situations. The head would not be a good protector in that case, and would not be trusted by the heart, thus weakening the head’s influence.

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Growing Humility in a Child’s Mind

The Link Between Love and Worth

We start in infancy with what is hardwired into our brains, and build upon it, based on experience. One example: A hardwired *desire* for fairness leads into seeking *definitions* of fairness, which in many, leads to defining self-fairness as humility, which leads to seeking pathways to humility:

Self desire for fairness => self definitions of fairness => one type of “my fairness” => humility => pathways to humility.

One pathway to feeling humility in the heart begins with a feeling of thankfulness to God. First, the child realizes that “God is good and God made all good things.” This leads to "thanking God for giving us good things.” So far so good.

But around the time the child learns this, he/she may also hear “We’re all sinners” and “We all do bad things sometimes.” Then we further attempt to explain to our children that God loves us even when we do bad things.

But also around this time, self-esteem (self-worth) is developing. If the child doesn’t feel the ***link*** between God’s **love** and the child’s **worth** (esteem), He/she might think “God is good, God loves me, but I’m not good.” And there we have poor self-esteem, which can last a lifetime.

First, the child needs to feel that it’s not as simple as “God’s all good, I’m all bad”. On the contrary, the child is *good* most of the time. To convey that, we might say something like this:

“God is good *all* the time. But we need to learn about “most” and “sometimes.”
When we’re talking about eyes, we can say “My eyes are open *most* of the time, and my eyes are closed *sometimes*.
When we’re talking about being good, we can say “People are good *most* of the time, and people are bad *sometimes*.”
Now, God loves us forever, all the time, with the best love, when we’re being good or when we’re being bad. But God wants us to try to be good.”

Once the child understands that he/she is good most of the time, God’s **love** needs to be ***linked*** solidly to self-**worth** in the child’s mind, so the child feels that God’s love defines his/her worth.

The family needs to encourage the child to grasp:
“God’s love means you are great and wonderful to Him, you are valuable to Him, you are worth a lot to Him! You are so great that God loves you always! Nothing can take away God’s love and nothing can take away your worth. Your worth is based on God’s love, which is big and great, and is always there for you forever!

With frequent reminding as early as possible in life, these concepts will sink in much better. This opens the door to where the child can give thanks to God, while simultaneously feeling like a worthy human being. Then, giving thanks to God promotes a strong humility untinged by humiliation. (1.6.26)

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A Pathological Path to Humility

One undesired pathway to humility is primarily *shame* based: "blame the self." This is where the heart uses humiliation to get to humility.

Shame is correctly used, to a certain point, when you have purposely done wrong. But it’s incorrectly used when you have an advantage that someone else does not have, and your ego is weak and unconnected to God. In this case, your heart-based superego (morals-based but clumsy) takes the reins from the ego and causes you to act selfishly to the point you are ashamed. This has the morals-based outcome of humility but with mixed with a sour dose of humiliation.

Instead, if you have an advantage, the ego should see it as a way of helping others, and logically craft a win-win way of using your advantage. The rational ego holds onto the reins, while the heart-based superego provides the emotional impetus for the action of helping and serving. (1.6.25)

Debt Erased

When you act selfishly, instead of subconsciously over-using shame and guilt to achieve humility, focus the forefront of your mind into using Gratitude to God (away from the self-directed punishment system of the heart-based superego).

When exploring Gratitude to God, the Heart may initially give you a feeling of indebtedness to God, which of course you will never be able to repay. But Jesus’ work has erased that debt. The Head must guide the Heart to know that Gratitude to God properly leads to a feeling of commitment to God. So to the same degree that you nurture this commitment to God, you can avoid the incorrect use of shame and guilt. Submit and commit, to God. (~20-teens, with significant edit 1.6.26)

Negligent & Purposeful Self-sabotage

As psychologists have long known, the more pressure a person perceives they are under, the more likely they are to go into self-preservation mode, although coping strategies vary and some are even self-destructive. But we often need to be reminded to step back and see if our own strategies have become self-destructive, because the tendency is sometimes to slip surreptitiously into self-sabotage.

There may be two types of self-sabotage: 1) Negligent, from failing to think it through when you should and could have, and 2) Purposeful as when the heart grabs the controls, saying “You don’t deserve this reward because you have made some mistakes in the past.” Often it’s hard to say which occurred, but either way the head is not aware of this self-sabotage because the heart has wrestled the joystick away, and now the head is simply subordinated and relegated to rationalizing, making up reasons that the actions being taken are correct. Letting go of your false sense of control, and realizing God is in control, is the way out of this.

Seeking

The mindset that is seeking forgiveness, is also, maybe unknowingly, seeking Christianity.

Shame

It is best to have a guidable heart that is motivated by desire to do right, instead of a stubborn heart that has to

be motivated by shame. So I suspect extreme shame might sometimes be an indicator of arrested development.

Shame avoidance

One type of shame that may be ok to a point is pre-shame or shame avoidance, where the mind says "No, that would really be bad if I did that" as opposed to the heart allowing the self to do something bad so it can experience the full drama of actual shame. And the heart does love the thrill of drama. So, some people's hearts may put themselves through this if they are addicted to drama.

6/11/20 update: I saw a recent study that said people who have "guilt proneness" are more likely to be trustworthy. The researchers differentiate guilt-proneness from actual guilt, indicating that if a person is guilt-prone, they are more likely to avoid something that would cause guilt. I agree but I think also, the deeper a person feels guilt, the more likely they are to try and avoid it, except in the person whose heart may be addicted to drama. (6.11.20)

No Zero Sum

In the process of changing your motivation from "guilt avoidance" to "brave action", be careful not to slip into self-sabotage by thinking you must always sacrifice by bringing yourself down. Like economists know (but only some will admit), success is not a zero sum situation, where one person's gain is always another person's loss. Instead, the "lawnmower and restaurant" analogy applies (in this document), illustrating productive use of resources vs. unproductive use. And the self is one resource. Sometimes God has success in His plan for you, so you may use it as a tool to bravely do right.

So You Don't Have To

Do not punish yourself, instead just have a passion for service. Remember, Jesus took the punishment so you don't have to.

Long-Term Help

Instead of undercutting yourself when you feel you have an advantage that someone else does not have, in hopes that your self-undercutting will help them feel better, remember that the first way to help maximum numbers of others is to ensure that long term, you stay in good enough mental and physical and even financial health to do so.

Humility, Guilt, Selfishness

Through the years I have gone back and forth between feeling humility based on guilt, and selfishness based on feeling good. At times I have wondered if it would be better to just go ahead and feel guilty all the time, to avoid the selfishness. But more and more, I think the way out of this vicious cycle is to say and to really feel, "Praise the Lord!" which gives the credit not to the self but to God, and at the same time, it is a positive expression of feeling good! Actually this note was inspired by an elderly patient I had who was once a pastor. He had dementia and couldn't carry on a conversation, but he would occasionally say loudly and enthusiastically, "Praise the Lord!"

Guilty for Guilt

You should feel guilty for feeling guilty so often. Don't dwell on it.

High Guilt Feelers

Guilty is one of those words that has a subtle double meaning. On the one hand, it is what the jury foreman pronounces the defendant when he is found beyond a reasonable doubt, to have committed the crime. But feeling guilty is another matter, because it includes a lot more subjective thought, which in some, magnifies the guilt feeling beyond its reasonable purpose.

I tend to think in terms of continuums, with regard to human behavior. One continuum is Guilt Feeling, with guilt over-feelers at one end, and guilt under-feelers at the other. Of course, it's not good to go overboard at either end. But if you had to live in a land where all the people were either guilt over-feelers, or guilt under-feelers, which one would you choose, and why?

Psychology has known for a long time that people who are psychotic, feel very little or no guilt, and they are subconscious rationalizers of their own superiority, needing little or no evidence to know in their minds with 100% accuracy that they are right. At the other end of the continuum is another example of subconscious rationalizing: The guilt over-feelers are those who subconsciously rationalize that they have done something far worse than they have actually done, even when they have done nothing. They feel and act disproportionately more guilty, than the level of misdeed would indicate, based on societal norms.

I have long known that I am a guilt over-feeler, but not to the point of needing help. I have made great improvement over the years, as my "enough is enough" mechanism gradually kicked in. However, there have been times in the past when I put out a guilty vibe through my speech or behavior, when I really had nothing to feel guilty about.

Now here's where it gets a bit tricky. "Guilty Behavior" is in the eye of the beholder. Sometimes I have exhibited outright guilty behavior, without being guilty of much of anything. I recall even blushing at times when someone else was embarrassed. But it seems that when I simply go only so far as to exhibit a little less self-confidence than the person next to me, and that person happens to be a psychotic-leaner, he/she will perceive it as guilty behavior. Over the years, I have come to see this phenomenon much more clearly.

Another variable that places the psychotic-leaner under the wrong impression is the existence of people who are excellent actors but are not in the entertainment business. Psychotic-leaners pride themselves on being good judges of character based on subtle behavioral and communication cues. The psychotic-leaner judges the excellent actor's high self-confidence cues, 100% certain that the actor is not acting. Psychotic-leaners have very little healthy doubt or second thought, in their own beliefs. As a partially rehabilitated guilt-over-feeler myself, I admit to sometimes having a lot of doubt, which is bad when it is overboard self-doubt, but not so bad when it keeps you from being hypnotized by the performances of others.

I have mentioned before that in the larger society, there is a use for most of the mindsets we see, including high guilt feelers on one side of the continuum, and the low guilt feelers on the other side. The high guilt feelers tend to second-guess and re-evaluate situations, serving as a double check system to ensure the group is headed in the right direction, more often concerned with accuracy. The low guilt feelers tend to help the group with speed and not getting too bogged down in too much re-evaluation, before taking action. This is quite an engine, but when "poor nation" type adversity is removed as it has been largely in the U.S., the infighting begins and the parts start burning fuel uselessly, like an engine revving, but not in gear because it has no hill to climb.

If I had to summarize my thoughts here, it would be to reiterate that low guilt feelers automatically assume, based on how they tend to feel and think, that a person who exhibits more guilty cues, must in fact be guilty of a higher crime. Ironically, the low guilt feeler who is so sure of himself, is actually placing his judgment in the hands of the person he is observing, trusting that the subject's exhibition of guilt cues is true and accurate and commensurate with the level of misdeed the subject has committed, as widely accepted in the society. However, I doubt you could convince a low guilt feeler of this irony. (2019-**2021**)

Faux Guilt

What should we make of people who proclaim their guilt in loud, overt, aggressive fashion? This seems contradictory, and I suspect it might be the use of faux guilt for power. African American author Shelby Steele addressed this in his book "White Guilt", although he should have also mentioned those whites who also genuinely felt a collective real guilt for white racism. So there are both types. At present, the scale at which white racism exists is currently under hot debate. (6/27/20)

Fail Not

Whenever you see or imagine a place where you failed in the past, it shouldn't remind you of only your failure - it should remind you of what you learned from it. And then a great determination should well up in your chest. That failure situation is no longer your path. (Substack 2/19/24)

Trade In

Trade your guilt for commitment.

Striving

You have to be comfortable in your own skin, be comfortable in your imperfections, otherwise your human existence will always be miserable. This doesn't mean you stop striving to improve, but it means you should look back on your striving and say, "I did what I could", provided of course, that you did everything you could have known to do and were able to do at the time.

However, sometimes we put forth just a small effort, thinking it's a big effort. Afterwards, having realized our half-heartedness, we should probably feel some immediate guilt, but it should serve only as a directional sign that we see as it tells us where to turn, in order to make the right turns on our path to good and right things. (Substack 5/30/23)

The Innocent
You need to stand up for the innocent - especially including yourself, in order for you to continue standing for them.

Judge Creeps
Build on whatever is there, great or small. Part of this mindset is to give credit to God. Otherwise the self-judge creeps in and tears you down.

Misplaced Passion
When God places you in a successful situation, build on it, do even more good things. Don't subconsciously take yourself out because of a misplaced passion for so-called equality.

Whoops
Don't expend your energy punishing yourself for stepping off the path, just use all your energy & focus getting back and staying on it!

Read All About It
At some point it may be good for many of us to read the psychological research on self-sabotage, as it has also helped me look into the causes and solutions.

Fancying the Self
Watch out for when things are going well and the mind starts fancying the self as superior somehow. This does not end well. Instead, see it as a red flag, and switch quickly to praising God, not the self. This doesn't mean punish the self for slipping. Instead, remember that God has many situations left for you to help others by using your good talents He gave you. The more you give the credit to Him, the easier this will be.

Avoiding Self-Sabotage
The maturing of the heart: one aspect involves getting away from the concept of "always". In the physical world, as we accumulate memories, we come to understand that things are more complicated, so "always" is not always the truth. For example:
In the physical world: Not always. The earth will not always revolve around the sun.
In the spiritual world: Always. God is always good.
So the head must guide the heart to know: We are not always supposed to sacrifice, for always sacrificing would mean over doing it, it would mean helping others but also self-sabotage. It is not helpful to sabotage the self, because it actually net limits our ability to help others. The heart is fueled by passion. So, have a passion for helping others in greater ways and amounts, at any level required by God, high or low. But the heart should not play God by deciding whether it should be high or low. The heart should have a passion for helping at whatever level we find He has us in.
God help my heart to stop seeking satisfaction in being more right than someone else and then thinking it's right in punishing the self for it. For this is not really right. Help it instead to defer to you, for knowing who is right and who should be punished is your domain, not mine. I cannot be 100% sure. Only you, God, can be 100% sure.

Deserving

For the guilt-feelers out there: As the years go by, and as you strive daily to help other human beings, you should increasingly see yourself as one of those occasionally deserving of help. (6/13/21)

Benefit of the Doubt

I sometimes think back and try to understand why there were certain conflicts in my life. Here are some conclusions I seem to have reached, at this time.

I think I have a touch of maybe autism, where I feel often that conversational niceties and even some social manners are just unnecessary fluff when it comes to getting the real stuff done in a fair and timely manner. While most would agree this is sometimes true, my brain kind of overdoes it compared to most social norms today in the United States.

Social niceties are apparently necessary to most people and are really very serious social concerns to many people, but in varying degrees. While sometimes I can see that my predispositions are pulling me away from these niceties or concerns, and I can immediately move to correct my course, to remain in line with social norms. Other times there is just zero realization of social nicety norms and I am totally oblivious. I have pondered this at times and thought of the people who are opposite of me: Those who ultimately don't care about fairness but are excellent actors when it comes to the social niceties. I believe these people probably outnumber me in this society or at least out-influence me swimming in the sea of today's norms in this country.

Then, because I am often at odds with these widely accepted norms, there comes the guilt, when someone's feelings are hurt or when I have committed a social faux pas or diplomatic error. And I think that since I am more prone to this type of societal error, my mind has developed a so-called coping mechanism of extreme guilt or self-blame. I guess my subconscious mind saw that these social errors were committed so often that the guilt had to be extremely intense to counter them, so that I would remember not to commit them again. The subconscious mind is complex, and I think it has allowed itself to even sabotage me at times, as it has its own idea of when I am going outside our societal norms and feels I am overconfident and must be brought down a notch or two, in order to focus primarily on the niceties again. This overdoing of guilt is an ineffective coping mechanism. The effective mechanism is to give it all up to God, but I have already written about this in detail elsewhere.

What I want to mention now is that some people appear to give me the benefit of the doubt, and they realize that I make these unintentional errors. Others seem ready to blame me for seemingly purposeful action, especially when my extreme self-blame kicks in, which I don't seem to be able to hide very well, and they see it as blood in the water and proceed to attack, as I am also attacking myself. So I am increasingly grateful to those who see my social norm struggles as unintentional and not willful or neglectful.

As a by-product of giving it up to God, my vision of a solution becomes clearer, as the veil of the ineffective coping is removed. I am socially handicapped in a way at times, and I will need a crutch to amble through social situations the rest of my life, instead of an ineffective coping mechanism. My righteous crutch should be a continuous self-reminding and effort toward being as polite as possible. This might even include foregoing some tempting attempts at humor, since it is difficult to assess all the situations where someone might be offended by certain humor. But this effort to counter these particular predispositions should be seen and felt as an effort toward helping others, which my subconscious does already place a great value upon. In fact I believe the ineffective coping mechanism of extreme guilt clumsily came out of this initial desire to help others. However, I am sure there will continue to be times where expedited fair and quick action take precedence over social niceties, and others may not understand the urgency of the situation. I will just have to innovate and find nice ways of communicating this, such as: "I'm sorry to have to cut short but I promised someone I would be on time" or "There's a situation that's becoming more urgent as we speak".

It is all very interesting, how we continue to come to higher and deeper levels of understanding of ourselves, even when we are older adults.

This guilt thing is complicated and through the subconscious, had a mind of its own, but my conscious is getting better at guiding it. Earlier in life, I would joke that I would blush if someone else did something wrong. But I've actually done this and there were guilty feelings, even if I was totally innocent but someone thought it was me who was guilty. Again I could not hide my guilt even though there was no reason for it in these cases, and this in turn would make me look even more guilty.

Yet another thing that used to happen but has improved, is that I would gradually slip into a pattern of selfish thought and behavior, and then eventually do something wrong and feel guilty for it. It was like the subconscious set me up to fail so I could complete this old familiar cycle once again, just for the sake of familiarity. So, there are many ways the subconscious can use guilt to control the self.

Sometimes I wonder if the heart-based id and superego have worked out a deal where, when the ego is not watching, they volleyball the self between selfishness and guilt just to get an emotional charge out of it (the heart thrives on emotion). The rational ego should stay vigilant and lead, by giving the false sense of control up to God, and then just doing what the Holy Spirit tells it. (9/23/21)

Unrealistic Perfectionism

Contrary to what a guilt feeler's heart may feel, you don't have to be perfect to deserve a defense against unreasonable punishment. Nor do you have to be perfect in order to deserve to bring charges against an offender. (1/21/22)

Cheap

On the one hand, if you're sometimes disappointed by what you've done in the past, it can motivate you to improve your future. On the other hand, if you're constantly and deeply disappointed by what you've done in the past, then without effort you might remain that way the rest of your days.

In some people, the Heart may overly condemn the Self just so the Heart can feel that it is right about something. The take-away here is that an overdone self-condemnation is a cheap and easy place to park your self-righteousness. Don't follow the path of least resistance here. Avoid the temptation to avoid the mental work required in order to move forward out of the mud. (4/9/22)

Practice

You may sometimes slip into feeling superior and lucky and even conceited about your success in something, taking credit for God's work, or maybe your passion for God has faltered from hot to luke warm. If this happens, and you also happen to be one of those people with a big conscience, your conscience may then feel guilt, and subsequently unleash the self-sabotager in your mind, to bring you down a notch, so you don't get overconfident.

Sounds like it should work well, but this process often over-reacts, causing more harm than good. In fact, the conscience may feel guilt even when it shouldn't, such as when you are interacting with someone less well off than you, or even when things in general are going "too well". The whole process is prone to error.

I believe it has a genetic basis, which is to keep a population from becoming a grand mob of self-righteous criminals, but it is ham-handed at best. The better process is to become astute at discerning that subtle uneasy feeling when the guilt bulb turns on. Then, you should make the quick trade of guilt for thankfulness.

Yes, ask God to take the sabotager now, and then thank God for providing a better way, for protecting your soul forever, for being number one, for being honest with you since he is the author of everything that is, for Jesus who took the punishment of hell so you don't have to, and thousands of other things. Then, go about your business with that thankful frame of mind instead of the guilt. God allows you to get better at it the more you practice it. And you are better able to help people this way. (10/27/22)

Would It Fit?

We have all observed some basic personality characteristics, such as: outgoing, shy, talkative, quiet, irritable, easygoing, high guilt feelers, low-guilt feelers, and countless more. We are all a combination of these many characteristics, and each varies from one person to the next, and over time. But this post focuses on one characteristic.

High guilt-feelers haven't necessarily done something worse than everybody else, but the way their brains are wired, they feel they have. You can't always spot a high guilt-feeler right off, because they often keep it hidden. High guilt-feelers know they have not lived a perfect life, and they feel bad about it. They often feel they won't measure up to standards in future actions as well.

High guilt-feelers find themselves especially in a hard place on this thought: How can I go to Heaven after I have totally ruined so many situations for so many years?

What if there was a religion where people could enter Heaven without performing any difficult activity, passing any test, or measuring up to any difficult standards? The only requirement would be that the person believes God has already paid the admission price. In the high guilt-feeler, this knowledge can lead to high-gratitude, which is the single best walking-around mindset to have, in order to function optimally in this world and beyond. Is there such a religion? The question is simply placed on the table for consideration. (10/15/23)

Update 1/7/26: I wrote this knowing the answer for me is Christianity. I intended to put it on Substack.com without the answer, to hopefully interest some of those who are turned off by any mention of Christianity, so they may start looking into any faiths that meet those criteria. To my knowledge, there's only one. (10/15/23 with update **1/7/26**)

The Conscience Compass

No, conscience is not only about guilt.

Your conscience may tell you to do the right thing simply because it's right, or it may tell you to do the right thing for fear of guilt. This is the old "carrot or stick" motivation. Either way you can have a conscience (moral sense of right or wrong) guiding you. Some may add a 2nd stick, which is when someone does the right thing for fear of getting caught and punished. However, most people might say this 2nd stick situation is not a virtuous conscience, but simply a fear of getting caught. But you can have a conscience without guilt, until you do the wrong thing, then you have both a conscience and guilt.

Feeling guilty (a moral remorse, regret for hurting someone in some way) is when the person does the wrong thing despite what the moral conscience told the person to do. It's a form of cognitive dissonance. A person who simply has a "fear of getting caught" and no moral conscience, might not have the moral regret/remorse but might well have a regret for doing something that may get them caught. "Feeling guilty" usually carries with it a remorse based on an empathy for the person who has been done wrong.
(3/23/24)

REVIEW THIS ARTICLE for possible use in next article: Toxic guilt & false responsibility
https://psychcentral.com/blog/psychology-self/2018/11/guilt-responsibility-dysfunction#10

End of Topic: Guilt

HAPPINESS

I’m a bit surprised I haven’t added this chapter until now (2/24/25), but One Dad's Notes is already about the intricate mechanics of how to be happy, joyful, or satisfied, so the road to these goals is discussed throughout this document, often without even using the word "happiness". Sometimes the road to happiness means not getting sidetracked down various roads to misfortune, and are part of that same cobblestone road.

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Happiness from Empathy

Empathy of course can be overdone, underdone, or done just right, like anything else a human does. But studies have shown that it’s generally one of the major ingredients in happiness, both when given and when received (1). We need to be on guard though, because empathy can be misused in various ways.

One way is “overly-selective empathy”. This is similar to “selective compassion” which I’ve written about elsewhere. This is when a person shows empathy to some but refuses to even consider empathy for others. Jesus said “Love your enemies”, which is a big subject in itself, but one part of it here is to consider why your enemies are doing what they’re doing. Imagine yourself in their situation. Once you’ve done this, you might decide to have some empathy for them or not. But at least you’ve considered it.

Also remember that to have empathy for someone does not mean you agree with what they’re doing, and does not mean you have to trust them not to do it anymore. Trust and empathy are two different things and do not always overlap.

Another way empathy is misused is when it is mixed with small-picture thinking (aka “one domino” thinking).

The most frequent example is feeling sorry for a drug addict who is malnourished, and giving him some money to buy food. Of course he will likely spend that money on drugs. Just the knee-jerk action of throwing money or empathy at a problem is often worse than doing nothing. Big-picture thinking says the addict will likely use the money to buy drugs, so the addict may need to be given a hamburger instead, or some other help that can't be spent on the wrong thing.

1. Medina, John: Brain Rules for Baby (2014, 2nd Edition) ISBN-13 #978-1-7323803-3-2

4/17/25

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"The Righteousness of the Underdog" Fallacy

"Comparison is the thief of joy." – Theodore Roosevelt

I would never have expected this quote from Teddy Roosevelt. He's mainly known as a tough combat veteran who was President 1901 – 1909, then decided to run for a 3rd term in 1912. During that 3rd campaign he was shot in the chest before a speech. The shooter was immediately captured, and after Roosevelt realized that he was not coughing blood, knew that the bullet had not entered his lung, so he decided to go ahead with the speech, all the while bleeding into his shirt. Later, doctors decided to leave the bullet in his chest muscle as it would have been risky at that time to try and remove it.

"Comparison is the thief of joy" is a great quote showing that even as a tough dude, he was in touch with thought processes that lead to certain emotions.

The quote observes 2 patterns that hold true: (1) Over-use of comparison sours the soul, and (2) some tendencies should be let go of, as a person matures.

Without Roosevelt's name, I would have suspected the quote came from one of those 1960's psychology movements, or one of the offshoots from them that still flourish today. While these movements are beneficial and sell a lot of self-help media, they're like everything else a human does: they can be overdone, underdone, or done just right.

As useful as it is, psychology is a bit tarnished around the edges today in my opinion, having been overdone in certain directions. One of these directions is overemphasizing what I call "the righteousness of the underdog" fallacy.

It's human nature to speak out for the downtrodden, the oppressed, the mistreated, the underdog. And it gives us a dopamine rush when we do. This verbal support is a good thing when someone has actually been mistreated.

But if we lose our desire to dive deep into the details and assess the degree of any actual mistreatment, we end up skating across those details on the thin assumption that the person surely must have been mistreated because of a correlation. For example:

Historically, being male is more strongly correlated with being a physical abuser, compared to being female. In a case of "he said she said", without any physical evidence, most would assume the male was guilty of hurting the female.

But to assume it's true before any details can be discovered is a fallacy, an oversimplification due to lazy thinking, impulsivity, or lack of emotional control.

The truth-seeker will get down and dirty with the details before making a decision. While I agree with most old sayings, I think "the devil's in the details" was invented by a lazy thinker because often, the truth is in the details.

DNA details: The National Registry of Exonerations reports that 614 people have been exonerated based on post-conviction use of DNA evidence since 1989. Apparently in these cases the standard of "reasonable doubt" was not large enough in the minds of the jurors.

No one is righteous simply from being a real or perceived underdog in a situation. People of all iq's fall for this fallacy. High iq does not protect against rationalizing biases that lead to wrong conclusions (1,2,3,4). And it's a fallacy in itself to believe that it does. *The underdog may sometimes be righteous, but not because he's an underdog.*

So, even a non-underdog tough dude like Theodore Roosevelt can introspect deeply on emotional issues and come up with a simple and catchy way of addressing one of the rules of life we all should live by.

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1. **Stanovich and West (2008) - "On the Failure of Cognitive Ability to Predict Myside and One-Sided Thinking Biases"** Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol 94, p 672
2. **Bruine de Bruin et al. (2007) - "Individual Differences in Rational Thinking and Decision-Making"** Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol 92, p 938
3. **Frederick (2005) - "Cognitive Reflection and Decision Making"**: Journal of Economic Perspectives, Vol 19, p 25
4. **Kruger and Dunning (1999) - "Unskilled and Unaware of It: How Difficulties in Recognizing One's Own Incompetence Lead to Inflated Self-Assessments"** Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol 77, p 1121

6/18/25 (Substack **6/23/25**) (Slight edits 1/8/26)

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Good Cheer
If you can cheer on the successes of others without comparison, you are on the right track. 6-19-25

Sweet Spot
Can we handle only so much or only so little pleasure? For example: The taste of food when too much is available, vs. the taste of food when too little is available. 6-22-25

Thief
Teddy Roosevelt said "Comparison is the thief of joy." But I might add, you have to know which comparisons are good and which are not. I'm sure he meant the kind that human nature pulls us into, despite our best efforts, where we compare ourselves to someone who is better off in the physical world than we are. 10.25.25

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Choosing the Right Role Model
Saving Yourself a Life-Altering Headache

What causes kids to choose certain role models?

Inborn Tendencies

Understandably, people just want their hearts to feel good. An inborn tendency.

When we're kids, the main way our hearts feel good is feeling safe, liked, & loved. Also inborn.

People, especially kids, have this desire to copy or emulate certain aspects of a person who makes them feel safe, liked, or loved. This is inborn as well.

If they feel loved by parents, they may copy or emulate some of their attributes to a degree.

Kids also have certain **concept areas** they feel drawn to, such as music, sports, comedy, speaking, art, animals, pretending, being right, mechanics, kindness, fairness, virtue, service to others, or focus on gratitude, and others. Some of these are emphasized by early exposure to religious faith.

People are exposed to these concepts during their lives, but their inborn brain wiring can cause them to be more attracted to some concepts than others.

For instance, early on I was attracted to music.

As they get older, kids look at famous people within these concept areas, as possible role models to emulate, in order to feel even more safe, liked or loved.

At first, they may emulate a sports star or musician, etc.

I was a musician for a number of years.

Later in life, if they don't soon rise near the top in their first concept area, they may continue to search for other concept areas. They may begin to combine two or more.

After very little success as a musician, I went into health care.

Charlie Kirk was like a rock star or sports star that caused a lot of kids to think "I want to do that".

The concept area he was good at could be summarized as "successfully arguing for fairness".

Since most people in the population tend to be virtuous most of the time, this seemed like an attractive concept area that many young people could go into, that fit with their brain wiring.

(2025)

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Just Happiness?
After just avoiding a car crash, what's that feeling you have? Relief of course, but then are you only *happy* you avoided it, or are you also *thankful* you avoided it? If thankful, who are you thankful to?
12.6.25

End of Topic: Happiness

HEAD & HEART

Child-Like

The heart seems to better grasp simple phrases, like a child. It often has an overly emotion-prone understanding of reality. The heart works better when it works in conjunction with the head.

Of course, as we mature, it's good to let go of some, but not all, child-like ways of thinking. For example, we should hold onto the wonder, amazement, optimism, and resiliency, but let go of the magical thinking,

irrationality, oversimplification, and tantrum-tendency. The head can guide the heart in these endeavors. (Substack **3/7/23** with slight edit 1/8/26)

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Vignette

After reading one of those books about the right brain and left brain, it struck me that the functions of the left hemisphere of the brain are more like what people call "the Head", and the right hemisphere is more like "the Heart". Of course, there are healthy and unhealthy ways these two can communicate with one another:

UNHEALTHY:
Right brain: "I'm afraid of this unfamiliar."
Left brain: "Shut up. I'm going to do this if I have to drag you kicking and screaming."
(Fear builds up and the right brain sabotages the situation.)

HEALTHY:
Right brain: "I'm afraid of this unfamiliar."
Left brain: "Remember, you are a good man, you have compassion, and also remember that God loves you and protects your soul forever. Protected forever, we can move forward and do what is compassionate, without fear. We can step out of the familiar failure and into the unfamiliar success, knowing we are God's, giving any glory to God. I reach across the corpus callosum to you. We can't do this separately. I'm a soldier but I must have a good heart that goes with me willingly. (Picks up the loved heart and brings it to his chest & moves forward.)
Right brain: (Feels loved.) "I am God's. It will last forever."
(~ 2012)

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Follow the Heart or the Head?

It seems that both the Head and Heart are holders of opinion. And they both try to grab the steering wheel in the brain. In a way, you could say the rational, logical Head has a heart-like quality because it *desires* to guide the self, though its criteria are practical matters such as pain avoidance, food, shelter, security, and maybe even the practicality of avoiding emotional pain, since is connected to the Heart.

The Heart's criteria on the other hand seems to be thrill or passion, whether positive or negative. It may crave thrill even at the expense of personal injury or risk of death. The Heart can be a dangerous character if not given the right motivation.

It is for these reasons that I (the Head) think, for most of us to attain happiness, the Head must be able to guide the Heart (instead of the other way around), to agree to move towards a situation where happiness is attainable.

Years ago, my Head allowed my Heart to open up to a Higher Power. Some may say "I followed my Heart" but with me it was my Head surveying the situation, and upon seeing that everything appeared safe, my Head said "OK Heart, here is your Higher Power. You may run free in this field."

Now also, being older and having an increasing degree of altruism in my brain, I am inclined to stand up and sacrifice like never before, not only for what the Heart feels, but also for the practicality of what the Head sees as a good cause for generations beyond mine.

Principle or Passion?

What do the head and heart want? The head appears to want to drive the self toward long-term positive outcomes, regardless of passion. The heart wants to drive the self toward instant passion, regardless of long-term positive outcomes.

Could the head be a subtype of the heart, because it has a desire for these positive outcomes? I don't think so. Instead of saying "desire", you could say it has a magnetism or a programming for moving the self toward

stability, predictability, principle, work ethic, politeness, cordiality, service, and other concepts that correlate to success. You could visualize this as the mature parent who is guiding the older child in the ways of long-term success. Or visualize the image of a soldier holding a child's hand, and guiding the child.

Likewise, you could say the heart wants the thrill of instant passion regardless of whether it involves the outcomes of success or failure, or even regardless of whether the emotions are anger or laughter.

So the common area in this Venn diagram is where instant passion, and long-term positive outcomes, overlap. In a person where the self moves toward long-term positive outcomes while simultaneously feeling good about it, the head and heart appear to be working together.

Constructive Criticism

One is wise who can take constructive criticism without feeling slighted. Actually, there are Proverbs in the Bible that say this same thing in different words, but it did occur to me independently, as I'm sure it has occurred to millions if not billions of others. However, it is something our hearts don't like to remember, and so is one of those obvious things that nonetheless requires a frequent self-reminding. (Substack 4/1/23)

Selfish vs. Selfless Heart, Fuel & Layer Analogies

I believe that in many of our human minds, there is a selfish heart and a selfless heart. One can grow while the other shrinks, and vice versa, within genetically defined ranges, or capabilities. We can make effort to move within these capabilities, to shrink the selfish heart and grow the selfless heart.

The heart runs on the fuel of passion. I believe the head can decide which passion fuel mix to choose - for example, anger and destruction, vs determination and protection of the innocent, among many others. You can see that one type of fuel mix fires up the selfish heart, and the other runs the selfless heart. So really, they both share the same gas tank. With anger in the tank, the selfless heart is left without anything to run on. Likewise, with "protection of the innocent" in the tank, the selfish heart is out of gas. (9/15/20)

One of the great psychological battles many of us face within, is that of the selfish heart tending to accumulate layers of self-credit (a.k.a. "Glory"), instead of sending these "credit layers" up to God. Immediate impulse (most likely the Id) tells us we feel good by adding these layers to the Id itself, but in the long run they cause insecurity due to fear of their removal by things that happen day to day, due to the increased sense of responsibility for maintaining them, an increasing juggling act.

A frequent self-reminding by the Head must override the selfish impulse, so that we go ahead and give credit to God, give up our own predictions of the physical future, realizing that it is "God only" who is all knowing and all powerful, who sends us not the layers of credit but instead the layers of gratitude, that fill our hearts and helps turn them from selfish to selfless.

Memory Associations

Apparently the ability of the brain to make associations between 2 separate memories, is a separate function in itself that can be used by the head or the heart. But the head should always be involved in it. Otherwise it leads to chaos and poor decision-making. It's like a video game where adult supervision is required.

Guide the Heart

We deserve whatever God has planned for us, whether feast or famine or in between. We must guide our hearts to know, that our hearts are not the deciders of what we deserve. God is. The heart like anything else human can be misused. Its proper function is not to angrily condemn the self nor others, nor to continuously wallow in sorrow, but instead to be grateful and to desire to do the right things going forward, all in the midst of situational feast or famine, or anything in between.

The Bell of Satisfaction

I woke up in the morning from a dream where my head and heart were like two people talking (similar to Thomas Jefferson's conversation between head and heart). Only in this dream, the heart character reminded me of my Mom.

Heart: Why should I follow you? You don't know the will of God, so you don't know what you're doing.
I felt like the Head should reply: "The Bible is our guide and I can ring the bell of satisfaction louder and longer than you could do on your own, if you work with me." 1/15/19

Guilt and Equality

The Heart wants fairness, which it defines as Equality. In some people, it occasionally sabotages the self, so it won't feel it is better than anyone else. The Heart must come to know – Equality is for Rights, and if you succeed, you can help people better.

This is a better way – transfer some of your success to them by helping them – instead of tearing yourself down so both of you stay at a lower level. The Heart however, might not buy into it right away, still clinging to economic or social status for defining Equality. The Head must gently remind the Heart, that God's definition of Fair is truly fair - it might not always have to do with Equality, but likely has to do with helping others, though only God can judge how well we are doing with it. So it might not have to do with Equality, but instead, has to do with God's definition of Fairness, which of course we cannot see as clearly as He sees. And we can only go by the wisdom He gives us, in the Bible, and in our conscience.

Long Term Health

There are a number of people out there who are well intentioned, good hearted people who wish for everyone's health care to be taken care of, but they are overly tender hearted to a fault, and mathematically less than stellar, and for them, to admit that 2 and 2 is not 8 would be too emotionally devastating. So they refuse to even take a look at the possibility that it can't be done their way. Thus, debt increases and we all go sooner over the cliff.

Need A Reminder

Sometimes we have to deeply revisit some of the things we thought our hearts would never forget. Just because the mind remembers it doesn't mean the heart remembers it. (Substack 10/12/23)

The Shadow

It could be that in many of us, the psychological Shadow is a guard, who stands at ease when we do good things and when we give the credit to God, but who works to sabotage us when we do not. The Shadow may be a part of the Heart, which sometimes guides the Head without the Head realizing it. The Head must give the Heart frequent reminding that God is our Judge and Jury, not us. Humbly accept what God has for us, feast or famine, even though our acceptance will not be perfect. He has designed it this way so that we will continue to learn many things.

But with regard to the Shadow sabotaging us when we get off track, it appears that self-sabotage, leading to humiliation, is the worst way to become motivated to get back on track. The heart needs a strong feeling to motivate it, and humiliation is strong but is not the best answer. Instead, opening your heart bravely to doing right regardless of the outcome (altruism), in itself is a heart motivator. And any glory that comes from doing right, must be shunted immediately up to God. So it is humiliation versus bravery, in this case. The Heart Language would be simply "Bravery."
(1/10/26 update: Later, through some introspection, I identified the Shadow as described here, as the Superego.)
~**20-teens** with update 1/10/26

Math by Head, or Heart?

Would it be fair if everyone paid 15% tax? Those making $100,000 would pay $15,000, and those making $30,000 would pay $4500. Or, would it be fair if tax rates went higher for higher incomes? For example, those making $100,000 might pay 18% ($18,000) and those making $30,000 might pay 5% ($1500). What about voluntary donations? Should everyone give 10%, or should it be based on your income?

Factual history should be the guide to decide which of these is applied, and not the emotional attraction of an idea. Results can be better predicted by how they have worked in the past, not how wonderful an idea seems now. It is easy to appear the hypocrite when arguing for equal percentages in one case, and graduated percentages in the other, unless you are backed up by some strong historical results showing which mode works better in the long run in which situations.

Imagination

When the heart starts controlling the imagination and creating little vignettes of failure, the Head must actually tell the Heart, "You are not to play God. Just because one time you called heads and the coin was heads, doesn't mean you knew it would be heads. It could just as well have been tails. So just hope, pray, and await God's answer. And pray in Jesus name, because we will never pray it perfectly by ourselves." The Heart may then reply, "Then what if my hopes are dashed against the rocks?" The Head will say, "Then you will someday see how God makes it come out alright in the end. Trust God."

Heart Surrender

The Head must guide the Heart to know, that we are creatures here below. In other words, the Heart should not play God and decide what the self deserves. Instead, the Heart should surrender to God, and rest in His comfort, knowing He will decide what the self deserves, with the heart being a good helper in whatever the outcome.

The Heart is afraid of what will happen if the self gets overconfident. So instead of playing God, the Heart should *surrender* to God, which leads to Humility, which is the cure for overconfidence. We don't know what we deserve. We are just to ask God and then humbly await the answer. The more we surrender to Him, the more earnest and humble and genuine our pleas to Him are.

Actually Do It

Head and Heart: Battle or Friendship? Many of us think we know, but it bears more introspection. When deciding to do something right, unfortunately, the impulse is for us to say "Yes, that's right" but not to actually do it to any significant degree. Therefore, any inkling of the Heart heading in the wrong direction, such as a Luke-warm thankfulness to God, should be met by the Head with the declaration of "This is no small thing." And then actually proceed to have the Head & Heart conversation that leads to greater thankfulness, including where the Head reminds the Heart of how this straying into Luke-warm thankfulness has led to trouble many times before. Part of our human condition is that our Hearts tend to surreptitiously slip away from that which is best for them. We should come to expect this will happen while we are in this world, and simultaneously expect that God put us here to Learn how to deal with it.

Anger

If you have any kind of anger even hidden in the back of your mind where you may not realize it, some people seem to be able to pick up on it seemingly in the backs of their own minds, and their reactions are not sympathetic, even though you are the one striving to diminish this anger. Quick, give it up to God.

Genuineness

It's not enough just to blurt out something you believe. Your heart has to be fully on board with it at the moment, unconflicted, in order to convey a true genuineness. Also, the heart seems to require a few seconds or minutes of introspection, or meditation, or prayer, to become convinced to step on board, unlike the head which can realize quickly that 2 plus 2 is four, for example. So the head should take care to give the heart this time, so that you will exude genuineness in your communication. You will not always have this extra time when new ideas are presented to you, but usually new ideas fall under certain age-old principles which can be meditated upon regularly whenever we have a chance. One of those bedrock old principles is "Don't jump to conclusions."

Now, when trying to discern whether another person is genuine in their communication, remain aware that there are many great actors out there who are not in the entertainment business, and they have a talent for seeming genuine when they are not. How they have managed to short circuit the process I have outlined above, is beyond me. I certainly don't have that talent.

Introspection

Make it a daily practice for the Head to look into the Heart and ask, "Why do you feel this way?" This is one form of introspection.

Intuition
If you have a slight intuitional feeling that you need to do something or hold off, that's no small feeling. Obey it.

Imagination
We all crave a good feeling in our minds. If it doesn't come from the spiritual, and it doesn't come from the physical, then our minds will imagine it and get it that way. However, in a mentally mature person, the head guides the heart to seek it from the spiritual.

Warm vs. Cold Heart
We each have our motivators, which some people call "hearts" – warm hearts, cold hearts. But I think we have varying degrees of both. Some view the subconscious as the heart, and the psychological concept of the shadow, as the heart. Which raises the question: Is there a documented psychological concept of good shadow vs. bad shadow?
1/10/26 update: Long after writing this, I came to see the "good shadow / bad shadow" as the "good superego / bad superego".
~20-teens with update 1/10/26

Reminder for the Head
Your Heart will attempt to lead you. So, the Head must lead the Heart to consistently give itself to God first.

Heart Overreach
Some of us may have the innate function of stepping up to shine during hard times, but we should take care not to create hard times through a subconscious (heart) desire to fulfill this function.

Desire vs. Practicality
Certain jobs are a more natural fit for people who think in certain ways. Often however, this is not a consideration when someone is deciding on a career. So if the choice is not a good fit, then great flexibility is required in order to adjust to it, and some people are able to succeed this way. One of the great ironies of life is that when you are young and you know the least about the direction you want to go, it is also the very time you must make the critical decision about which direction you want to go.

Conflict
Sometimes, the heart may create conflict because it thrives on thrill. The Head may need to say to the Heart: "(1) you want to serve, (2) you hate hypocrisy, (3) So why create conflict? It's hypocrisy. You want to serve, yet you create conflict! It doesn't make sense and it doesn't make heartsense. As the Head, I'm not inferior. I'm equal and I'm here to serve."

Risk assessment
Sometimes, the sinful part of the Heart says "Where's the thrill in praising God?" The answer from the Head is: "It is in the abstract - a deeper realization of how bad things could be without Him, and how grateful we are for not being there." (August 2020)

Logic, Emotion, and Money
Where emotion rules, a person is more likely to blow out their credit cards and not be able to pay it back. Where emotion and logic are in balance, a person is more likely to save for retirement. Where a couple includes one person ruled by emotion, the other person sometimes must be so logic minded that he/she appears to lack emotion as perceived by the first person. But this may help them keep their retirement savings.

Who Are The Real Innocent?
People who have figured out the difference between the head and the heart, are *one* step ahead. People who

have figured out how to get them to work together, are a *thousand* steps ahead.

In good people, the head & heart will work together to help the innocent. But in each situation, figuring out who the innocent really are, and what help really is, is the job of the head. The heart is necessary for motivation, but left in charge without the head, the heart obscures facts with emotion, causing the self to become a loose cannon.

Do you give a homeless person some cash that he may spend on drugs, or give him a protein drink out of your car, or give him a piece of paper showing how to contact a shelter? Do you listen to both sides of an argument, actively seeking sources that you agree *and* disagree with, or do you throw your viewpoint the raw meat from only one side? You can see which of these several situations involves the head along with the heart, and which leaves the head out.

Make your decisions. Then go help the innocent, with a calm, solid steel resolve that can only be changed by undeniable fact. But in the process, if you find you're getting angry, you might be denying the undeniable. (Substack 2/21/26)

Don't Make Me Stop This Car

One thing the heart seems to want, is to be right about something. I think it wants this so bad, that sometimes it grabs control of the steering wheel of the imagination, driving it to imagine the worst outcome.

The heart might do this for a couple of reasons. One is to mentally prepare itself for the worst, so it won't be that bad of a surprise if the worst actually happens. Another might be so the heart can say it was right all along when the worst thing happens.

But in some of us, the heart wants so much to be right, that it reaches past the Conscious into the Subconscious, and is able to send an override message to Behavior Control, causing a self-sabotage situation. And of course, messing up something is a pretty easy thing to do. Then the heart can feel after very little effort, that it was right all along. No, it doesn't make sense, but then we're dealing with the heart, not the head.

The Head must step up its game, shining the flashlight of realization on what really happened here. It must admit that its buddy the Heart violated their "talk it over" agreement and went behind its back. The Head must ramp up the vigilance & be the parent like it's supposed to be. Or next time it might have to stop the car. (**10/13/23**) (Substack 10/13/23) (Slight edits 1/11/26)

Adversity

Could it be that in most people to some degree, hardship softens the heart, and softship hardens the heart? Obviously it doesn't always go this way, but this is another way of saying that adversity sometimes brings out the best in us, while extended easy times might move us toward being a little overconfident.

Trusting God

As many times as I have encouraged my heart to trust God, sometimes it doesn't. Yesterday when I was thinking about it, the word "overlord" popped in my mind, telling me that sometimes my heart thinks it's over and above the Lord.

I wondered today then about different people's ability to trust God and if this has to do with natural predispositions to either trust authority or question authority, predispositions to feel you are right either way vs being open to being wrong, predispositions to define authority as a paternalistic punishment-based system, or define it as a set of rules that we need for safety.

These things deserve further thought but for now, in any case, the head should continue to guide the heart to love and trust God. Through that continuation, hopefully the heart will let go of that tendency to assume the role of the overlord. It is time that role should be retired and surrendered up to God so He can dispose of it, or transmute it into something good as only He can.

Differentiation

One advantage to getting older is that I can tell more readily and with greater accuracy, what my emotional subconscious (heart) is doing as it sends up a feeling, so I can assess it through a conscious logic filter and label it with a red or yellow or green flag, or some color in between those depending on the urgency.

The Childish Heart

Interpreting a dream I had

I had a dream last night that I was hanging around with a friend from decades ago, but it was present day and we were on a vacation. This guy in real life was on the same track as me back in high school, a rock musician, grades were not very good, but then in his late 20's he went back to school and is materially very successful today.

In my dream though, he was concerned with some things I could not understand why he was concerned about, and was not concerned about some things I was concerned about. In other words, I couldn't understand his mindset. Also, he had some friends sitting at the table with us, who were very serious and down to earth, and they sounded like high level CEO's discussing corporate strategy.

After waking up, it seems my interpretation is this: I still struggle with my childish belief that money is the root of all evil and that I don't understand the mindsets of the materially successful people. It is actually the love of money, not the money, that is evil. And from my childish heart's view, it cannot understand this nor can it understand that the mindsets of the materially successful may well include a good conscience.

In other words, from my selfish, childish, oversimplified heart's view, the mindset of the materially successful has to be selfish, when actually it is not necessarily that way. The Bible verse about the camel being able to fit through the eye of a needle before a rich man can enter the kingdom of heaven, comes to mind (Matthew 19:24). Saturday Night Live even had a skit about it one time. I think that verse hits a guilt nerve in many of us. But not too long ago, I heard someone say that this verse should be taken in context, which is that with God, all things are possible. And therein is the way the heart should come to view the verse after all, as the heart matures. (1/21/20)

The Childish Heart, Part 2

The Bible is a great tool for the head to help the heart continue to mature and be less and less childish. However, the heart itself hates to lose some aspects of childishness, because it sees the childishness as an innocent, helpless quality, even feeling that it is a little person, in a way. Therefore it finds ways of holding on to it, to protect it.

The truth is, there are good and bad aspects of childishness. We have all let go of many of these over the years. But seeing which aspects are harmful and must be let go of, is a task of much introspection, consternation, and most of all, continuing practice by the head and heart together. It is something you don't want to do, like getting out of bed in the morning. But the Lord has it in His plan for you to learn, as well as do, these things. For learning by itself doesn't work. (12/3/20)

The Heart and Subconscious Connection

The more time that goes by, the greater my realization becomes that the Subconscious is more powerful than I ever thought possible. It seems to be connected to the Heart, more so than to the Head, and to Intuition, more so than to Reason.

The Subconscious is running like a computer subroutine in the background, so you don't have to micromanage stuff in the Head (Conscious). So, when the Subconscious and the Conscious are on the same page, for example with Christianity, Godspeed occurs.

Be a simple enough person that you don't overthink things, second-guessing God. But also be complex enough that you don't forget the Subconscious can get out of hand, and requires some monitoring. So once again, as with so many things, there is a sweet spot happy medium.

Number One

Let me not just HAVE a logical reasoning that God is number one, but to embrace that reasoning with a passion, feeling the enormity of it deeply. This will show the heart and head are in the same boat.

Forgiveness vs. Self-sabotage

An earnest request to God may involve feeling like you are at the bottom of the barrel and with no where else to turn but God. And, just as important, feel in your heart (not just know in your head) that "Jesus took the

punishment so you don't have to."

In a guilt-prone person, it's important to feel deeply the "You don't have to" part. This way the inner self-judge does not get to hear the case where you were charged with sin. He doesn't get to self-sabotage your actions in any way because of any guilt from being less than perfect.

Selfish vs. Selfless - A video game analogy of one aspect of brain function:

At the top of the video, we see the Head and the Heart competing for control over the Behavior Joy Stick, with the Heart sometimes impulsively grabbing it away while the Head isn't paying attention. The Head, however, would not be so impulsive or unethical to do this to the Heart. (This reminds me of the two political parties in the U.S., but I digress.)

There are some avatars in the video game, for the Head and the Heart to choose from. One group of avatars is the Selfi-cons, who behave selfishly. Another group is the Altruisti-cons, who behave selflessly. Each group of avatars has its own Ogre, who can sit things out, or be assertive by simply standing up, or be angry by acting out. Each group also has an Imaginator, who causes the brain to imagine all sorts of things.

You can imagine the endless possibilities of how this plays out in the real world, depending on whether Head or Heart is in control of the joystick and what avatar they have chosen at that moment. And this is only a small part of what all goes on.

Cultural Mindsets

I think based on his letter describing a conversation between the head and the heart, Thomas Jefferson could have been considered one of the early psychological thinkers. This might be one of the little-known positive aspects of his mindset.

On the negative side, Jefferson was a slave owner. He may be an example that when a person is raised & lives in a culture where certain sins are frequently seen as "not sins" or "less grievous sins," it can promote the person's rationalization of those sins. Such rationalization may also be true in drug cultures, for example.

But also, even those who sin might have some useful ideas that are not sins. Of course, any good ideas do not excuse the sin of slavery. But they are a part of the more complex picture of any person's life.

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Service vs. Self-sabotage

I have indicated previously that the internal self-judge should retire. But when the selfish heart makes a mistake and the good heart is alarmed by it, what mechanism should be in place to keep the whole heart on the right track?

The whole heart has an innate passion for fairness, but the head must do the work of getting the heart in the habit of feeling that God defines what is fair and not any self-judge. In fact, Jesus' forgiveness runs contrary to a sentence of self-sabotage that would be handed down by the self-judge, so self-sabotage itself would be unfair. If the self-judge has any fair function, it should be to re-direct the heart to help others, not to self-sabotage, which only decreases the ability to help others.

There is a difference between sabotaging the self, and restraining the self. It could be that the internal self-judge should issue a restraining order, but not a sentence of self-sabotage. The difference between sacrificing yourself to help others, and sacrificing yourself to help yourself, as a way of getting your humility back, may mean the difference between self-restraint and self-sabotage.

Also, the head must learn to speak the language of the heart, which is more like communicating with a child. For example, "No, you don't punish the self, you just keep doing right." I suspect this language phenomenon is because the heart may be located mostly in the right brain hemisphere in many people. (Written in the 20-teens).

Update 1/12/26: Since I wrote this, I've mixed parts of the ego-id-superego theory in with my own theories. So the concepts & names of characters have changed a bit:

The superego is the internal self-judge.
The superego is emotion-(heart)-based, so thinks more like a child and is more of a subconscious influence.
The superego is morals based.
The superego has a selfish side and a selfless side.

The id is the internal fun-seeker.
The id is emotion-(heart)-based, so thinks more like a child and is more of a subconscious influence.
The id is not morals based.
The id has a selfish side and a selfless side.

The ego is the internal referee.
The ego is rational-(head)-based, so thinks more like an adult and is more of a conscious influence.
The ego decides which thought path is more correct – superego or id – and allows behavior based on this decision.
The ego has a strong side and a weak side.

I've written other notes herein that go more in-depth on keeping the ego strong, and the id as well as the superego selfless. (~20-teens with moderate update **1/12/26**).

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Fuel of the Heart

In some maladjusted situations, the heart can be a double-edged sword and appears to desire emotional intensity more than happiness. It may have a hungry passion for this or that, whichever thrills it the most, regardless of any happiness.

One of the passions in my heart is fairness, although people's hearts define fairness differently at different times. At times previously, it was easy for me to attain that "righteous" feeling that "this is fair" by sabotaging my self so that I didn't feel superior to anyone. This is a type of "**moral certainty**" where a person innocently but mistakenly believes his morals are indeed righteous.

Or my heart might sabotage my self *after* I felt superior for some reason, so the same heart that thrilled on superiority, then felt the next passion of humiliation, then finally the passion of moral certainty for being humiliated after feeling superior.

The emotional heart has an ability to affect the head's frontal lobes apparently, like alcohol. So the head must continually turn this around and so that the head leads the heart in the correct definition of fairness, which is to help others up, not bring the self down.

The heart may say, "I'm a heart. I run on thrill and passion. What's the thrill of helping others unless there are great accolades and praise for it?" To find an end to these up and down thrill cycles, the head may ask "Is it possible the heart could run on a different passion, like gratitude instead of thrill?

Like a combustion engine can be converted from gasoline to natural gas, this conversion requires the head to frequently introspect on the definition of fairness as bravely doing right, protecting the innocent, like a soldier, casting selfish insecurities to the wind, like rushing the shores of Normandy.

The new fuel could be bravery or gratitude, or other virtues. Like a caller on the Dave Ramsay show once said "We learned to see the joy in a set of numbers." The heart can be taught to get passion, joy, and even thrill out of things it did not previously, through introspection, showing the heart what new passions could come from these old things.

There is a certain thrill in being virtuous, especially if there is adversity against you, as most people are born to fight for something, and/or against something else. This is why I think that when there is relatively no "Maslow Level 1" adversity" such as widespread starvation, many people no longer find a passion in facts, such as finding sustenance for the day, and they turn to imagination and entertainment.

Why do some people do this while others maintain a passion for facts? This is another whole discussion. But for many, when adversity is gone, so is the thrill, so the heart should learn to run not on the fuel of thrill, but

instead to run on virtues such as courage or gratitude, realizing that adversity is gone only temporarily, and creeps back in, when gradually we start running on thrill again. So, one virtue is guardianship.

Horse, Softball, & Lifeboat

In all this introspection about head and heart, I am reminded about 2 occurrences from my past. In one, I was about 12 years old and my Dad and I had gone to Shannon stables and rented a couple of horses for the day. My horse's name was actually "No Name". At that general time in my life, I often felt that to try to make something happen was a selfish thing to do, and that I should just unselfishly let things happen, and all would be taken care of. Well, I let the horse go where it wanted, at the speed it wanted. Eventually I got far behind my Dad and his horse, and got lost. After a while of wandering aimlessly, my horse then got tired of all this and decided to take matters into his own hooves and bolted toward the barn, galloping and running close to tree limbs to try and knock me off. I think at one point he even rared up. He ran all the way inside the barn to the trough and started eating. The guy inside the barn said "You can't ride that horse in here!" I replied "I didn't, he just ran in here." But the guy didn't believe me. At the time, I should have learned that while you shouldn't force things to happen, it's not good to be too passive either. But it took a while.

The other occurrence: I was probably about 8 years old, on the playground during recess. The boys were playing softball. It was my turn at bat. My basic attitude was the same as above - just unselfishly let everything go its own way, and everything will be alright. After the pitcher threw several good throws and I didn't swing at any of them, the boys started shouting at me to "hit it". After the pressure grew, I swung and connected with the ball. It went a decent distance, I think I made it to first base.

The overall lesson here is, your heart may feel it's doing the fair thing by not taking action so as to let everyone and everything else have its own way, when in fact, as we learn eventually, taking no action sometimes lets the team down. Interestingly, even the adult heart needs to be reminded of this, in us high-guilt feelers.

In the mind, it seems there is a trainable horse, and an untrainable horse. This is the good heart and the bad heart. The rider, the head, should choose to ride the trainable horse that agrees to thrive on the care provided by the rider in exchange for good behavior. If the rider tries to ride the untrainable horse, it will never obey, even though it accepts care & feeding from the rider, for it seeks a wild thrill, it wants glory for itself. The rider can tell which horse he is on by that feeling of either A) The glory is being shunted up to God & I am happy with that, and that is complete here, or B) There's got to be more, I want more of this glory. The second feeling is a red flag telling him he is on the wrong horse altogether and that they are not joined in one purpose, and to just get off and say no, this is not part of me, this is separate and I will let it go away from me and not feed it glory. It may roam the pastures all my human days but I will not ride it, so it will not take me in any direction. But as I observed in my real life scenario with No Name, a good horse may become selfish if the rider has no purpose.

It's not the head's "being right" that should trigger the head to rein in the heart - it's the heart's selfish reaction to the head's "being right" that should trigger the head rein in the heart. And as mentioned above, if the head simply cannot rein it in, then you are on the untrainable horse, and must stop and take the time to switch horses.

In human life, the heart does not function best as a wild horse. It functions best with the head guiding and riding it, a symbiotic relationship, beneficial to both. It's one more case where mature thinking is able to differentiate the various factors, and where previously immature and overly child-like thinking overgeneralized and lumped all factors into one, implicating the innocent along with the guilty. Like I used to tell my kids, have good fun, not bad fun. Differentiate. A happy heart is not a bad thing, if it's having good fun.

Humans are set up by God to have a head. If it were heart only, it would be ok for the heart to be like a wild mustang. But the head is in the picture, so for the heart to throw the rider, or run off, means there would be conflict when there doesn't have to be.

Carrying this analogy of Head and Heart being Rider and Horse even further, the horse and rider must be in synchrony, and in synergy. The Head should rein in the Heart to stop short of the boundaries, where going beyond means taking credit for good things (**glory-hogging**), or thinking it knows for 100% sure what will happen (**overconfidence**). Of course the horse may feel that limiting his boundaries this way is like being limited to a small circus ring. But the head must stay in its role and in control.

This is the realm of proper human domain, the realm of "I don't know God's will for me in the physical

world", a humble mindset. This mindset undoubtedly influences those around you I believe, in ways we can't even imagine, attracting those with a like mindset or inspiring them to be more humble, although we don't know to what degree God has planned this. Letting go of this outer, selfish self, is something that could even influence the choice of a spouse that your son or daughter may make, although to what degree this is true, only God knows.

4/6/20 addendum: Well it appears Freud has stolen my analogy of the horse and rider. Today when searching on id, ego, and superego, I see this: "Freud made the analogy of the id being a horse while the ego is the rider. The ego is 'like a man on horseback, who has to hold in check the superior strength of the horse.'" I think this analogy is fairly obvious given human experience, so it has likely occurred to other introspectors throughout history. And also like others, I've added some tweaks to it.

One is that since the id is more powerful in some people, this could be related to the flexibility and intellect of the person which could *override* the id, and this in turn likely has a genetic component, because learning itself requires flexibility and intellect.

(~20-teens with update 4/6/20 & moderate editing **1/16/26**)

Freud on TV

It occurs to me that a TV show I have been watching called "Deadwood" has characters that could be considered id, ego, and superego. Of course with any human product, including TV shows, we have to be careful not to assume its message is perfectly accurate, but instead cautiously consider the information presented. So there, my ego has just made a prudent statement.

Christians in the Storm

One day in my 20's I was introspecting on my purpose in life. Without any planning or apparent effort, my imagination sent me a visual of some Christians in a lifeboat in a storm, with me in the water several feet away from the boat, being tossed about in the waves. Then one of the Christians in the boat reached his arm out to pull me in. And so with his pulling efforts and my climbing efforts, I was delivered safely into the boat. But looking back again on that visual, I see now that the boat continues to be rocked in the storm as long as we are human beings. At least I'm in the boat now.

Prisoners Dilemma & Freud

Recently I saw an article about the old "prisoners dilemma" phenomenon being addressed by a person who decided to have different computer games attempt to win the dilemma. The most successful program was one called "Tit for Tat" where the program initially came to the table with *trust* and politeness but then returned the same response it was met with afterwards.

So if it was met with kindness it continued to return the same, or met with opposition, it returned the same. The NPR program where I heard it also spoke about the implications of human evolution, and why we tend to operate in this same way in human interaction.

I think the kindness represents the superego, which is moral based. The opposition represents the self-preservation-minded id. So the most successful person comes to the table with the predominant superego. Then if he meets opposition, switches to the id for self-defense.

For society to come together as one, we need not only a certain amount of shared adversity so that we are brought together with a common goal, but we need mass *trustworthiness*, which also depends on brain wiring as well as experience.

I have a theory that high guilt cultures appear to have a greater trustworthiness factor which may be more efficient when beginning the tit for tat negotiation. Stephen M.R. Covey's "The Speed of Trust" discusses the efficiency part of the equation. With guilt, there may be a predisposition to second guess oneself, reducing impulsivity, which would also be an advantage in tit for tat. My hope is that one day the emerging science of Behavioral Genetics will give us some more detailed answers on all this.

Wandering Heart

Like a wandering child, sometimes your heart can sneak off to a place where your head doesn't realize it got off to. The head has to be more vigilant for red flags.

Wisdom
Wisdom has many parts, one of which is the head & heart learning what *not* to dwell on. William James had this same basic thought but worded it differently. I think this is one of those times where I read someone's words and the thought later recurred to me but in different words. Sometimes however, I have thoughts and then find a quote where someone else has thought it as well. Either way, some thoughts are profound enough that they recur and should be passed along as signposts.

Fact vs. Emotion
Unfortunately nowadays in the U.S., people increasingly believe the strength of their emotions makes them factually correct.

Bravery
When choosing to operate in bravery and giving credit to God, instead of focusing primarily on shame avoidance, remember if you don't do "bravery and credit to God" with a passion, the heart will likely shift its focus back to shame avoidance, or even shame and self-sabotage, in order to create a passion. "Bravery and credit to God" is a principle. Sticking to your principles gives you a "fighting for something" passion.

Blame
There are at least 2 ways to assign cause. One is to lay blame, which conveys a selfish attitude whether the cause is assigned correctly or not. Another is to logically attribute the result to the cause. The difference is in how well the head works with the heart.

That Bucket
Upon hindsight and introspection, it feels like there is a certain bucket of passion that can be re-routed in one's life. For example, when you stop playing a musical instrument, this passion might be shifted to the conversational arts. (Substack 12/13/23)

Reminding
With the mind, there are many "attitude sub-routines" running that have to be correct in order for the mind to function optimally. Some get neglected and you have to go back and re-emphasize them to your heart.

To Stoop in the Store is Stupid
In the store, when someone much shorter than you needs help reaching something on a shelf, you don't just stoop down so you won't look superior to them. You actually look stupid if you don't use your God-given situation to help them. This is an exaggeration for analogy, but for some reason in more subtle cases the childish Hearts of many people have a tough time getting this when it comes to testing standards and other aspects of life where the Heart wishes to focus on empathy instead of solutions, which is often an ineffective, misguided way of attempting to be helpful.

I think the reason some people's hearts feel the need to bring down the self and even their society, to make the disadvantaged feel better, is that many of these self-sabotagers accumulate this perceived inequality in their hearts as a heavy load, and for whatever reason they have not off-loaded it to God, who by the way has an endless capacity to take people's heavy emotional loads and burdens.

When you rise up in the store to use your Helpful Advantage, do it and then give Thanks to the Lord for your advantage. That way the credit load does not accumulate in your heart. You have given credit to the Lord and you may move on unburdened by any feeling of unfair advantage, to help others in whatever way you can.

This process of unburdening the heart of the credit, allows me to accept whatever God has for me, accept that He also has ways for me to respond to challenges. Strangely, when I focus on acceptance of what God has planned, not knowing whether it will be pleasant or not, for some reason my expression of compassion for others comes through in greater quality (more genuine) and quantity, as long as I continue to work on feeling that God's capacity to offload my burden is endless, even picturing it and feeling it going into an endless tunnel up to God. And I am able to thank God for everything, whether it seems pleasant or not, because nothing happens without His permission, and He makes good come from all things for those that love Him.

But back to the grocery store analogy: Stooping (lowering the self so as not to appear superior) as a misguided way to attempt to help in this case, is an example of short term, small picture, immediate gratification thinking, in the same way that giving a person a fish, in the old saying, is much quicker and more immediately rewarding to a giver who sees himself in his heart as some "Grand Benevolent Bestower". (Of course he would never admit to this.) Instead, teaching a person to fish takes longer but helps give the disadvantaged person the additional gift of independence. (3/22/21)

The Definition of Help

Laws and societal norms can be good or bad. But we should not try to disrupt or counteract these norms due to any simple desire for a thrill. We should instead strive to be helpful, whether it fits the norms or not.

But we should also be on guard that, for some people, being helpful gives them a rush or thrill. And this in turn may cause the definition of "helpful" to become blurred by "thrill intoxication."

If taken to extreme, thrill intoxication can cause a person to prefer to give short term immediate "help", which could be at odds with a more effective long-term helping strategy. (I use the word "could" because short term immediate help is of course needed in some cases.)

The Head should remind the Heart of this frequently. Then of course, any credit for good works should be forwarded to the Lord because the Heart does not deal with the accumulation of that credit very well. (3/14/21) (might put on substack)

Sit

Sometimes you just have to sit with your Heart until it feels right, especially when you feel it tugging on your shirt, like a small child. If you don't spend this connection time, it won't ever feel right.

The Heart may take some extra time to actually get the feeling of what the Head is guiding it towards. For example, when the Head is monitoring the emotions in the Heart, the Head might notice the Heart slipping back into some form of selfishness. The Head may then lead the Heart away from selfishness by praying for the comfort of others, and crediting our Higher Power for all things good, instead of crediting the self. But if the prayer is cut off at the end of the words, and ended abruptly, the Heart may not get the chance to feel it fully.

Except in emergency situations, the Heart may be slow and cautious in getting on board with something, even something familiar. I believe because of this delay, which can last from a few seconds to a few months, the Heart becomes wiser and doesn't get jerked around as much, which is a survival skill for it, in this world. (May-**June 2021**) (Substack 10/20/23) (Slight edit 1/17/26)

Maturity

To me, Emotional Intelligence is not always about the level of emotion. It is also very much about the maturity or quality of emotion. A person may have a high level of emotion but if the head has guided the heart in the right direction, this may be entirely appropriate.

Convinced

It seems like with every concept, both the head and heart must be convinced of it separately, in order for the self to be totally on board with it. And I believe the Head must help guide the Heart in this, not the other way around.

Some may say well, the Heart must first desire a fair situation, then the Head can begin analyzing things toward that end. But I believe the Head has likely taught the Heart over many years, since childhood, what fairness is. And of course, as even more years go by, the definition continues to be fine tuned in most of us, as we more clearly see that God has our best interest at Heart, even though we don't understand many of these

situations here in this world. (May 2021) (might put on Substack)

Worry

The head must ask the heart: Is it ok for you to be fed by "a load off your mind" instead of glory? You know, when you accept glory as payment, then you feel guilty and you set about to self-sabotage, because it is a familiar path, a vicious cycle, a type of emotional masochism. But the new family or familiar, is God, who protects your soul forever, the perfect "load off your mind". So give Him the glory, and you take a load off your mind. (might put on Substack)

Helpful?

The heart may cry out, "I desire humility, and my friend Shame has always given me a lot of feeling and kept me humble at the same time. Why let Shame go?" The head replies: "Do not lead us to places where Shame will visit us. 'Submission To God' is a better friend than Shame. 'Submission To God' will not send you heartache, and she will keep you humble as well. But we must allow her to stay with us, and see her often, and she will become a familiar friend." In the transition from welcoming Shame, to welcoming 'Submission To God', I should frequently remind myself of a key question that unlocks the door to the right one: When I have done some thing, or I am about to do some thing, the one question is: "Is this thing helpful?"

The head needs to occasionally step into the realm of the heart and explore it. Have a conversation between them like Thomas Jefferson did. The heart may believe in an oversimplified version of fairness, as a child does, saying that "If I do better than someone else, then it's not fair because people are equal, and have the same value."

The heart must somehow learn that we have the same *spiritual* value that doesn't change. You may have a better physical or mental talent than someone, and use it to help others because God gave us different talents. In heart language, "It's fair to help others" and "The more you have, the more you can help others."

Note that these phrases are simple and child-like, yet they also make sense from the head's viewpoint - an area of working agreement with the head and the heart. I suspect the brain mechanism for this could be related to simple phrases that are also high in emotional value, such as some of the words or phrases that are allowed over from the left-brain hemisphere into the right-brain hemisphere, which become apparent after someone has had a left-brain stroke.

For the head to guide the heart, it must speak the heart's language. There appears to be a mechanism for this, and it probably involves prayer, and simple phrases the right brain can understand better, even poetry, catchy phrases, music. Sometimes you have to have a "head to heart" talk with yourself. When the heart gives you these occasional flashes of selfishness in your mind, or self-sabotage, you can reply to it, "That's not helping someone" or "That's not helpful."

The Head Tells The Heart

One thing the head can say to the heart is "Don't do it or you'll get in trouble" when a selfish impulse comes up. Also, the head can say "You don't deserve to be in trouble. God has it for you to stand up for these people." And "Give the credit to God".

Not So Trite

My most recent prayer: "Let us make effort to do good and right things, and then give thanks to God!" While this may sound trite and bland to the head, it gives you a good feeling if you can let the heart really feel it. (10-28-21)

Introspect

As the years go by I get better at seeing what direction the Heart is steering me towards. It's just kind of a feeling you get when you sit and introspect, and try to see what type of situation your heart is leading you into. If the Head takes this seriously as a significant influence, instead of just writing it off, then it can communicate with God and with the Heart and say, "That's fine" or "I don't want that", and ask God to steer the Heart in a Biblical direction where you protect and help others, especially the innocent, and also protect and help *yourself* equally as one of the innocents who has the power to help others, keeping in mind that no human being who is

innocent is also perfectly innocent, but that there are some who are much more innocent than others, and it is those we should especially try to help if possible, keeping in mind the big picture vs. small picture conflicts, and other numerous factors that come into play in each unique situation.

I think there are some who will be willing or able to introspect like this, but many others in populations across history do not, and so we see cycles of civilizations rising and falling, as many people in each population have Hearts that guide them into self-destruction after decades of decadence, possibly subconsciously so that society can return to the adversity which made it stronger in the first place.

Hopefully over time, the percentage of introspectors will increase so these types of success/failure cycles can diminish or come to an end, with our Heads and Hearts working together so that our Hearts don't have to lead us back into adversity in order to return to humility, but instead keep humility in the forefront with the Head reminding the Heart that God is number one, and He is in charge, and one task he gives us is to protect and serve others, especially the innocent. (3/15/22) (might put on substack)

Job

Our hearts tend to identify with and then agree with someone who uses certain language, but our heads say there is a difference between identifying with someone, and whether you believe they are doing the right thing this time. (2/23/23) (might put on substack)

Sudden awareness

One practice that I have gradually been getting better at, is being aware of that sudden feeling when the id-heart grabs the joystick of the mind and conveys all at once a feeling that says "I take credit for doing this good thing, I'm dominant, I know what's going to happen and I'm lucky, and I just released some dopamine to prove it!!!"

The other part of this practice is for the Head (ego) to get the joystick back but not angrily as the superego would: The Head says "Hold on, let's think about the reality here, you know this doesn't work, let's have some balance between everyone (id, ego, superego)."

Further, as the ego should be the Captain over the competing id and superego, God is the General over the Captain, and should be consulted frequently (prayer). The love of God should be dwelled on by the Heart, that He protects your soul forever. This I conjecture releases oxytocin which should be the preferential fuel of the mind, as opposed to mainly dopamine. (4/21/23)

Heart Prayer

There's a difference between, on the one hand, saying some words to God, and on the other hand introspecting first on the immensity and power of God, to prepare to open the door to your heart, to let your heart be fully in on the praying and the gratitude. (8/6/23)

Disinformation

All this Heart-perceiving feeling of advantage & disadvantage is actually disinformation to the Self. God is number one and knows the real truth of it. Act accordingly. 6-23-24

Prodigal

The prodigal son parable may have in part been a lesson on zeal, intensity & enthusiasm, as indicators for where your heart is. 6-26-24

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When Your Heart Is Just Wrong

Don't follow your heart. Negotiate with it. The heart is just a part of your overall psychology. Following your heart would be like following your left leg - you'd walk in circles. The head is like your right leg. You need both to cooperate with one another, in order to walk straight.

Freud was wrong about a lot of things, but he did happen upon a couple of good ideas. (So we shouldn't throw the baby out with the bathwater, although it's popular nowadays to ignore the difference between the two.)

I won't go in great depth on Freud's ideas about the Id, Ego, and Superego, already having done that in other articles, except to say that in my opinion, the Heart seems to be the domain of the Id and Superego, while the Head seems to be where the Ego resides. (The idea that a big Ego indicates a selfish heart comes from a perpetual society-wide misunderstanding of Ego theory. The Id and Superego are the ones that reside in the heart, and can be selfish.)

We've all had our hearts pull us in the right direction, and in the wrong direction. One thing that tells me if my heart is off track is - how I feel about being given a gift.

On the one hand, do I feel entitled to it? Do I feel like I deserve more? Am I resentful that I couldn't afford to buy it for myself?

Or on the other hand, do I feel undeserving, guilt-ridden and ashamed that I can't pay back the cost of the gift?

Of course an even keel is best: Neither one of those extremes.

A heart on the right track then becomes thankful, then humble, not overconfident but not self-disparaging either. It then has a desire to become helpful.

I think this sequence from Thankful to Humble to Helpful is automatic in most people, and likely has a root in behavioral genetics. But I do not discount the spiritual aspect of a higher power that created genetics in the first place.

As we all have seen, people around the world are thankful for spiritual gifts. This along with the Virtue Sequence of thoughts (Thankful => Humble => Helpful) probably has ensured the survival of our species.

However, history shows us times where the hearts of many slip away from virtue and towards another behavioral genetic tendency - selfishness. Yes, that tendency lurks in the corner and takes over when people feel there's nothing to be deeply thankful for.

Of course this has been the cause of the fall of great civilizations. Unfortunately, once the selfishness becomes widespread, especially through generations, many do not recognize it in themselves, seeing only that "Everyone is doing it, so what? It's normal."

A society that has become mostly selfish eventually brings about its own demise, leading back to the adversity of tough and lean times, where then people become thankful for simple sustenance, and allowing virtue to rise again.

But total demise can be avoided. Sometimes enough adversity occurs before society hits rock bottom, and most people wake up again long enough to correct the course. Also, there are other ingredients besides our Virtue Sequence.

The bigger question is: What is the character of a society? Are there enough people that simultaneously (a) have the foresight in their heads to see what's coming, (b) are thankful for something that keeps the Virtue Sequence going in their hearts, (c) are willing to work and sacrifice to the point of altruism in order to counteract the downtrend, (d) are smart enough to come up with a successful strategy, and (e) are able to maintain a large enough coalition?

Each one of these concepts depends on the average brain function of those in the society. To be sure, our experiences shape our brain function, as a sculptor shapes a piece of stone. We should all strive to shape that mental stone to the best of our abilities.

But the type of stone each person starts with, matters as well. This is why I have hope for the emerging science of Behavioral Genetics, that when applied properly, will give us insights into the highest and best use of each type of mental stone each individual human being has to offer. These insights may well help us keep our hearts in the right place. Just ask your favorite a.i. “How can the science of Behavioral Genetics help people with their emotions?” (1/6/25) (onedadsnotes.substack.com 1/7/25) (Slight edits 1/17/26)

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End of Chapter Head & Heart

Heart Language

Heart Language is defined here as words that are crafted simply so that the heart can get ahold of them and feel them more easily. They usually involve simple language, sometimes with rhymes, but the main characteristic is that they evoke emotion yet make sense also to the head.

What I used to say to the kids as they went out the door to the school bus in the morning: “Take care of yourself and some other people too.”

Sometimes, this is all there is to it:
To overdo a good thing is to undo it.

Stand on principle, sit out revenge.

Words vs. Action
It’s not for me to talk about Heaven all that much, but instead to live like I am going there.

Anger
Learn to see anger as a stop light.

Service. (Sometimes a single word is the best way to communicate with the Heart.)

God is number one.

The Lord is number one.

I Don’t Know
I deserve what God has for me – and in this world, I don’t know what that will be. Feast or Famine or anywhere in between.

Only
In this world, only God knows, while we can only hope to suppose. (substack 1/26/23)

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Forgiveness:

To forgive does not mean to allow.

To forgive does not mean to always trust.

You can forgive, but you don’t have to submit.

Forgiveness and Trust are not the same thing. They may or may not happen together. (substack 1/29/23)

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Reality
Game over, Real Life Now.

Jesus
Game over: Jesus now.

Purpose
The better you take care of yourself, the better you can take care of others.

Rejecting Self-Fulfilling Prophecies
Yes, I can be someone's close friend. Reject the self-fulfilling prophecy that I will disappoint them so I should not get close to them. Just have a servant's heart and continue to give, and it will be alright.

The Rest
Do your best. God'll take care of the rest. (I'm definitely not the only one to think of this, but it's one of those phrases that if allowed into the heart, helps comfort greatly).

The Bottom Line Awaits
God is #1 and that is the bottom line and whether we're thinking about the bottom line or not, it's still there waiting for us to think about it.

Calm Servant
What you do is not as important as being a calm servant of God.

Confidence
If you believe in Jesus, and let Jesus in your heart, then you'll believe in your heart.

Imagery
Sometimes Heart Language consists of imagery, so here are some art photo shop ideas:
Person with stove pipe connected to chest, letting smoke go up to God so He can process our sin and dispose of it, to keep the sacred fire going in our hearts
Person with a power cord coming from chest, unplugging the other end from "physical" (a socket on the ground) and plugging into "spiritual" (a socket overhead with a shining light behind it).

Avoiding Self-Limitation
I have said to myself: There are many people who do good and right things; one of them may as well be me. Someone's got to do it.

Intentions vs Decisions vs Actions
Good intentions and good decisions and good actions are not the same thing.

How Bad
You have to think about how bad things could be, to keep them from getting as bad as they could be.
and
Imagine how bad hell would be. The more you imagine, the more thankful you'll be for not going there.

The Attitudes
Only God knows all the time.

Let it go up to God.
I am here to serve.
God only.

Hope & Plan
God please let our hopes match your plan.

Resources
And what will you do with the fruits of your labor?

Determination
Do we pick ourselves up and continue to be a force for good?

Habit
When you are about to leave the house, ask yourself, what have I got, and what have I forgot?

Sacrifice vs Sabotage
Lord help us see clearly the difference between sacrificing ourselves to help others, and sabotaging ourselves which does not help others, instead it serves only to satisfy a conscience gone too far, when it should have gone just far enough.

Concrete Abstract
The clearer you can see it, the easier it is to defeat it.

Passion, Courage, and Cowardice
There is a comfort in having a passion for the virtues.
There is a comfort in virtuous bravery.
There is loud and quiet bravery, and there is loud and quiet cowardice.
A coward may survive, but leads to the demise of his society.

Virtue
What has all this been for, if not for something noble?

How to fail:
Fail to fail. Just give the glory to God, and your conscience will be clean.

True cost
Tell your children: I don't want you to get hurt because you might not know the true cost of things.

Virtue
Have a passion, and commitment, to do good and right things.

Either way
Come feast or famine, do right.
Do right regardless.

Let's Repeat
Here are some main Heart Language thoughts to repeat, because the Heart of the Mind is like a muscle; it does not get strong from exercising only one day:
God is number one, and don't think beyond it.
I don't know what God has for me here.
Be ready for anything.

Accept feast or famine, and use it for good.

Preparation vs reaction
It's one thing to respond. It's another thing to prepare beforehand.

Dreams
I had a dream the other night and just after waking, I asked myself "What is the takeaway message from this?" The words that came were basically "Don't go to the weak place. There you will find all kinds of excuses why you couldn't follow your chosen path."

Tragedy
Jordan Peterson once said something like "The myth you act out may be a tragedy, and maybe you don't want it to be." In addition to that, I say many people have set that script down and walked away from it, and you may as well join them, so the tragedy is no longer self-fulfilling.

Remorse
When you have done something wrong to someone, but they won't tell you what it is, you may say to them, I'm sorry for whatever it may have been.

Have enough
Do you have enough God in your heart to make the tough, selfless decisions?

Fantasy
Now don't go supposing too many self-congratulatory things, because swimming in fantasy can cause you to drown in reality.

One Top Attitude
One of the secrets to a happy life is don't go around expecting too much out of everything. (12/4/20)

Repitition
Got problems? Repeat the solution, because once might not cut it.

Productivity
Braintime – How you use it.

Reason is the Baby
Have a heart but don't let it have sole dominion over all your opinions. Don't throw reason out with the bathwater. (This last sentence may help the heart to understand that Reason is highly valuable, like a baby, and should not be discarded. This is not fooling the heart, but instead helping it to understand true value, for without reason in human life, we are reduced to animals.)

Vigilance
When your imagination starts going wild, let it be a red flag that your feet are no longer on the ground. Lord keep the feet of my heart on the ground.

Hospice
I ain't goin' in the shop.

Extremes
A human being can turn the good into the bad by taking it too far, or not far enough. More and less are not always better.

Shame vs Glory
Shame is a signpost. Don't stand there next to it. Head right and give God the Glory for your new direction.

Unexpected Reward
If I strive to do right but am rebuffed by those around me, I am inwardly strengthened by God, giving me a reward in my heart, especially when I do not expect that reward, because I do right regardless.

Humility
Lord please help me to stay at a humble place, and not have to be shown the way back to it.

Sacrifice and Joy
Learn to see the joy in sacrifice, for the better is gained.

Service
Are you being helpful to look cool, or are you being helpful to be helpful?

Type of Persecution
Is our church in the U.S. being persecuted in a different way?

Inspiration
Sometimes the good guys win, and that helps a lot of people.

Effort
All God asks is that we make good efforts, imperfect though He knows they will be.

Hope
I pray to God, help while I hope.

Repentance
Amens and amends usually come from the same type of heart.

Assumption
Don't be a poser, or a supposer.

Lord
Recently I have found that simply by saying to myself "The Lord", it brings the enormity, awe, superiority, and love of God into my mind and heart, which in turn brings me to a relaxing place of balance. (2020)

Overconfidence
God Only. When that subtle feeling creeps in that says, "I'm doing a pretty good job here", it needs to be followed up with "God Only", because only God gets the credit. Otherwise, I'm overconfident, which tells the internal self-judge that "He needs to be brought down a notch."

While it may be true that you need to bring down the confidence to a happy medium, it is not the self-judge that should do it. Instead of bringing down your zeal, *bring up* your commitment to being constructive, building, and doing right. Both of these adjustments prevent overconfidence, but one is destructive, while one is constructive.

Act On It
One of the best feel-goods comes from acting on good principle.

Exude
You should strive to realize that the Lord is filling you with a radiant positivity to the point that it should

overflow to those around you, in the form of uplifting service. In other words, I need to exude God's warmth, to others. (May, 2021)

Peace
I have a sense of peace, from the Prince of Peace.

For Yourself, Too
Gotta take care of the care taker. (3/16/22)

Rich and Poor
If you're poor in money and poor in spirit, you don't have anything. If you're poor in money and rich in spirit, you have everything you need. (7/29/22)

Patterns Unveiled
The decades will force your eyes open. (9/22/22) (Substack 3/9/23)

Any Tool
Use it correctly. (This refers to any tool God has given you, including your body, which includes your brain. It includes any situation God has placed you in.) You know what correctly means. It means humble service doing good, while giving thanks to God. (People in the 1700's often signed letters with "your humble servant", indicating they valued this concept. Of course it has gone by the wayside now.) (1/6/23)

Heart Body Language
Pointing the index finger up, or forward, or out. But not in blame. (This says "I am focused on the other". Before one of my sons was able to speak, there were a few times when I picked him up, and he pointed to something across the room. I wasn't sure why, but it may have indicated that there is a strong early tendency to use this gesture to focus on "the other" for some reason. Interestingly, many years later I saw a co-worker pick his similar-aged son up, and he did the same thing.) (1/6/23)

It's not about what I'm going to get. It's about what I'm going to give.
And
It's not about what I'm going to get. It's about asking God: What am I going to do now? What gets me in sync with God now? Usually the answer is: Thank Him.
(Both of these can be felt in many situations, but especially when you hear someone talk about physical and spiritual rewards for doing good things.) (1/8/23)

Riches…have different definitions. (3/6/23)

"Keep your head down – like a bull" may sometimes be appropriate. (4/6/23)

Watch out, anger is a boomerang. (4/10/23)

Evil – be not afraid of it, and be not of it. (5/18/23)

When the words & actions don't match, believe the actions. (2023)

God pays you to help people. (8/19/23)

The more I can do, the more I can do for others. (11/29/23)

God take that selfish part, and just let me be the helper that remains. (1/10/24)
Note: This prayer may be a signal that I'm ready to shift the altruism epigenetic transmission into overdrive.

(1/15/24)

Lord, when we try to fulfill our own desire, let it be the desire to serve you. (4/15/24)

Go & Do. (5-24-24)

You take the bad with the good, but when the bad outweighs the good, you don't take it. 6-12-24

Let's not go from I to A.I. 6-15-24

Look for ways to go and do help. 6-15-24

Most of what we do is what we will. Move into doing what we can. 7/3/24

Are they unaware, or just don't care? 7-12-24

The horse before the cart is to thank God before taking action. (2024)

If it's hard to increase your thankfulness, let yourself be blinded by thankfulness. 8-27-24

Most everybody wants to help, we just disagree on what help is. 10/1/24

When you say Amen, it also means "I'm in." 11/4/24

Bottom line: Thank you God for my certain future. 11/16/24

Gratitude stops the need for the harsh self-judge. 4-10-25

Dwelling on Jesus' sacrifice moves the spotlight in our minds from self to God. 4-28-25

Our days are full of deciding what's too far, and what's not far enough. 5-16-25

Since God has helped you, go help others. 5-25-25

Salvation – Imagine how good it is by imagining how bad it would be without it. 7-15-25

Errors are there to help you learn what not to do next time. 7-28-25

God takes me from hell to help. 8/13/25

The only time you should have idle hands is when they are placed together in prayer. 10.21.25

"All debts are off!" – Jesus 10.26.25

Help like crazy. 1/28/26

No skin off my soul. 1/29/26

End of Topic: Heart Language

Humility

Perspective
No matter how humble you actually are, there's always somebody who will think you are not. (August 2020)

False Irony
The false irony of a passion for humility is that we assume passion is always aggressive, and humility is always passive, so we assume they don't go together. (Substack 3/19/23)

Striving
When you think you are humble, you are not. When you strive to become humble, you are closer to it. Part of the striving is bringing your mind to realize that you don't really know what God has for you in this world. But you trust that it's for the best.

Hope vs Expectation
Hope, without expectation, is one way to describe humility in this world. (Substack 9/14/23)

Passion, God-Confidence
God please let me go forward with a strong Passion for humility, not degrading the self, but on the contrary, knowing that I am a strong defender, not an offender. You are Number One and You guide my actions.

Easy Times
To maintain humility during the easy times, you don't have to put your sense of self under the ground, just keep its feet ON the ground.

Overconfident
When God gives you some sort of advantage, do not look at it as an advantage. See it as a tool God has given you to do more good and right things. Don't get to feeling lucky. Remember you don't know what God has for you around the corner. It could turn on a dime. It could be famine or feast. Use either one to do more good and right things.

Service
Humility, and serving others, lasts only as long as your integrity holds to it, moving forward into the future. It can be destroyed by one bomb blast of selfishness, creating a need to start all over again.

Self-Congratulation
We are never "prayed-up", just like we are not humble the very second we think we are. In both these situations, a form of self-congratulation seems to be the problem. We should instead send the credit to God.

Conflation
Those who mistake humility for cowardice are sadly mistaken and might be rudely awakened.

Immaturity to Maturity
Destructive internal narratives are used by the heart to achieve humility, but instead achieve humiliation. These narratives are like pieces of immaturity, and should be broken off and let go of, up to God so that He may process them as only He can do. Then, God places adult bravery where the destructive narratives once were lodged. And this Bravery, mixed with Gratitude to God, forms a new alloy which is stronger than either one alone.

Repentance
In my prayers, I feel good and complete about saying "God I reject this sin in me, please take it all." But if I say I'm sorry for it, it leaves a sour whiny deflating feeling. With my particular mindset, I believe that taking responsibility for sin doesn't have to accompany sadly crying about it and wallowing in sorrow. It feels more right and complete for me in particular to admit that yes, it's me and now I reject it, please take it no matter the pain or discomfort the taking and cleansing causes in the short run. The long run involves Heaven.

Defense
At some point, we must humbly but effectively defend ourselves.

Vigilance
One ingredient in a successful mindset is being able to imagine how much worse things could be. Another

ingredient is being able to discern a way to prevent things from getting worse. And one of those ways is often just paying attention to those inklings that hint to you when humility is slipping away.

Red Flag
Learn to see and feel when your humility is disintegrating.

Human Illusory Superiority
If you are feeling strangely uncomfortable because things seem to be going too well, remember, life requires continuous maintenance because chaos opposes you, and the more well off you are, the more you can help others, and the more credit you can give to God. Just continue to build on what you have built, as long as God will allow it. And when you get that sudden flash that you feel you have an unfair advantage somehow, see it instantly as a red flag and toss it over to God like a hot potato, because we really don't know for 100% certain what He has for us next in this world. This is one of the ingredients in Humility.

Self-worth
To achieve humility, you don't necessarily have to let go of the physical things you like, but you do have to let go of your sense of self-worth tied to them.

Confidence
One sought-after personality goal is the fine line balance of humility and confidence. These two are often mistakenly assumed to be opposites but in fact I believe many sports coaches know that they are compatible without hypocrisy.

Types of Bad
For humility to take place, you don't have to *feel* bad, just remember how quickly things can *go* bad.

Realization of Humility
We are never "prayed-up", just like we are not humble the very second we think we are.

Communication & Humility
I may occasionally have an insight that results from being able to see around much of the words and fluff that proliferate within human communication. However, if I try to pass along my observation to others in a self-serving way like, "Hey, here's what you need to do", then they will disregard it. So my referral has to be selfless from the heart, like "Hey you can try this if you think it might help."

Telepathy
Walking through the neighborhood tonight, I see some people have very well adorned houses, with their outside lights turned on, to highlight them. Are they doing it for safety, or as a gift to the eyes of others, or to show off? Or a combination of these? We don't know.

When someone desires to be respectable - are they doing it as a gift to those around them, or to get respect for themselves? We don't always know. And sometimes, the answer that we conjecture to reach, may be more reflective of our own way of thinking than someone else's. This is one reason I tend to lean toward not being 100% sure of the things in this world (although for some things I may go 99.9%). Telepathy among humans does not exist, contrary to what a person with psychotic leanings might tell you. (7/9/20)

Credit to God
Don't focus on limiting your energy as a way of staying humble. Instead, focus on whatever you can do to serve, allowing that energy to excel, and giving all the credit to God, as a way of being selfless. So in the process of removing the glass ceiling of self-sabotage, whenever you have a selfish thought, simply remind your heart: "That's not serving."

When your focus is on an old definition of fairness that says you limit yourself so others don't feel inferior,

this in turn actually limits your serving to others. Instead, when you focus on serving bravely, humility comes without self-sabotage. Thus the difference between a child-like and a soldier-like mentality. I shouldn't limit myself. God will limit me when He sees fit. My task is to serve in whatever capacity I find myself, which can change any second, according to His will.

One reason the self-based heart takes over sometimes is that, a failure to see or remember something produces a feeling of deep inadequacy and keeps you humble. So the self-based heart may block a memory or perception from coming to the surface, in order to keep you "in line", or keep you humble through shame. Humility is the goal, but this is not the way. Reason must tell the heart that this scheme, however well intentioned, is still a selfish attempt to play God, and has been uncovered and overall is detrimental to helping others and protecting the innocent. The heart may receive this explanation as a child receives the explanation of why he should not play so rough with his little brother, and even though the child was innocent and just meaning to play fairly, he is resilient and learns a slightly new definition of fairness, and goes forward.

The heart then of course wants to know – what are you going to replace the shame with? How are you going to be that deeply motivated to stay humble? The answer is to see any selfishness, even such as this scheme, as a red flag and then put up the white flag to God. The humbling thing now is not that you did something wrong, but instead that you don't know what God has for you the very next minute. We don't have to limit ourselves. We are already limited, compared to God.

Stop the self-sabotage:
Give all the credit to God.
Don't overthink it.

Pleasure

God does sometimes give us pleasure from the things of this world, if we look at them through the lens that He has given us to use, which is the Bible.

Type of Intelligence

One type of intelligence is the ability to recognize when humility is slipping away.

False Choice

Even though the head knows otherwise, the heart may oversimplistically believe there are only 2 choices: down & humble, or up & conceited. The heart is however gradually learning, through great repeated efforts by the head, that it is possible to be up and humble, by being up & grateful to God. This allows the heart to realize that it is already in a subservient, humble position to God without having to create this position on earth. And, that we are forgiven even for when our submission to Him is not perfect, so we are more grateful for that as well.

Policy vs. Personality

What's considered humility may vary from person to person. We may not like the personalities of particular leaders, but more importantly we must ask: Have their policies created higher employment, or more dependence on government? Results speak louder than personality. A person's actions may be humble while their words may not. Is helping in good ways a humble act, regardless of personality? I say it is. So, the heart would do well to learn this. And it is time sensitive, so Humility now, avoids humiliation later.

End of topic: Humility

Hypocrisy

A New Psychological Phenomenon
Because of the hypocrisy that abounds today, someone could say that about half the U.S. has "cognitive dissonance". However, the definition of cognitive dissonance assumes the person has a conscience and feels the stress of being hypocritical. So, what many have is probably just "oblivious-to-dissonance".

Practice vs. Preach
In the past 40 years I have noticed the average person increasingly does not practice what they preach. They may say "The more you know, the more you know you don't know" and then act as if they are certain of that which they cannot be certain of.

One Christian Hypocrisy
It's one thing to encourage someone to spread the gospel to strangers, and another thing to criticize someone for not doing so, since the gospel indicates we all have different talents (Romans 12:6-8 & 1st Corinthians 12).

Numbers
Numbers don't lie. But how we talk about the numbers can lie. Especially if we gloss over the assumptions and leave things out.

Bite You
Not only will your own hypocrisy come back to bite you, but so can the hypocrisy of others, if you don't call them on it. (Feb. 2021)

The Contrary
By pointing out someone's hypocrisy, I am not trying to make them look or feel bad. On the contrary, one of my aims is to help them see their hypocrisy and then decide to get rid of it, so they don't actually look or feel bad.

Consideration
One of the great hypocrisies is to say that someone is wrong without agreeing to hear their case. People with certain personality types tend to do this more often. Don't be them.

Conscience
Most people have a conscience, but some less deeply than others, despite what they may say.

Christian Hypocrites
If Christianity is to grow again in the world, we Christians must get the message out that we are hypocrites, and we are not hypocrites. Christians are hypocrites because all humans are hypocrites at some point. But the Christian who proclaims he is a hypocrite, is not a hypocrite for saying so, and he admits to what non-Christians accuse Christians of, which knocks the ball back into their court. It might go like this:
Person A: "Christian, you are a hypocrite. You claim to be so good but you are not."
Person B: "No, in fact I claim not to be good many times, therefore I'm not a hypocrite on that point. And being a sinner does include some occasional hypocrisy because everyone is a hypocrite at some point. Therefore since I admit to occasional hypocrisy, I'm not a hypocrite on that point either."

Wasted Sacrifice
If your sacrifice spoils someone, you must reconsider before making the same type of sacrifice again, if you really care for them. (Substack 7/23/23)

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Will The Real Evidence Please Stand Up

Someone might be called a hypocrite when he changes his opinion on a matter. But there's a 180 degree difference between the hypocrite who jumps back and forth on his positions, and the person who changes his mind based on the evidence.

Someone might also be called a hypocrite when he maintains his opinion on a matter, when it is contrary to the evidence. This is more prevalent.

Seeing through all of this involves looking at the evidence. But since the dawn of humankind, we have been set upon by countless unsavory, or at least, unwitting purveyors of false evidence. How do we tell what's real?

AI deep fake audio, video, and print media are advancing so rapidly that a grand irony is occurring: The computer, the very device that was created to enable complicated truths to rise to the surface so they can be plainly seen by ordinary folks, will now be the device that spews a Pompeii-like eruption of fake information so rapidly that many will not escape the deluge.

Hopefully many others will see in advance what is going to happen, and begin early getting their minds outa Dodge, becoming "screen skeptical" in the process.

As trust in screens evaporates, we will find ourselves back in the times when people trusted only what they saw with their eyes directly, or where they trusted certain people in their lives that they knew personally and spoke with face to face. (At this point, old books will become more valuable for their information, not just as collectibles.)

Might sound a little barbaric to anyone born after 1990. But it might be a good thing if this "distrust of screens" catches on like wildfire, scorching the so-called virtual reality that is being created around us like a time lapse growth of an impenetrable forest.

As the waters of evidence become increasingly muddied with advancing AI, people will no longer be able to put the same weight on evidence as they used to. However, there are a couple of arrows left in the quiver. One is *Motive*.

Motive is not evidence but can point the way to evidence. In a sea of fake info, people will start putting more weight on motive, but they must do it wisely, or fail. They will have to turn up the adrenaline and start having a longer-term memory of things that happen in their lives, such as "I make more money now but I can't afford as much." That statement is first hand evidence of something that physically happened to you. It is not someone's wordy explanation of what happened to you. It is critical to understand the difference between words and action in your life. Falling for the words only, is fraught with failure. In the physical world, words are only as good as the physical reality that backs them up.

Now, wherever you look, you can find all kinds of different reasons or so-called evidence these physical things happened to you. But which one is correct?

Arrow 2: *Patterns*. Notice for example that when the people giving this certain reason were in charge, these other things happened as well. Could be coincidence or time-lag, but maybe not. What patterns of real occurrences happened in your life when the other people were in charge? Notice many patterns and compare them. The more the better. Then you will notice: a Motive emerges.

All this stepped-up mental activity will require us to get up off our collective mental rear-ends and start flipping on some unused neurons. Get the heck outa Pompeii.

(3/27/24) (Substack 3/27/24)

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Other Ideas Still Working On Regarding "Electronic Dependence":

Like nuclear energy, AI could make everything better, or destroy us, but most likely there will be an array of situations in between.

Nuclear power can be thought of as an energy accelerator, and AI can be thought of as an information accelerator.

Accelerating any nefarious use, is what we have to worry about.

With information, the worry is deception. Humans have been deceiving one another as long as there have been humans. But AI, coupled with human dependence on electronics, dangerously accelerates the deception potential.

Like anything in this world, AI is not good or evil, but it's used for good or evil by the minds that control it.

Everyone has a phone, which means that web influencers now have megaphones.

We should not be influenced by the sheer volume and magnitude of the eye & ear candy we consume, or the loads of dopamine we now crave due to our desire to be liked while swimming in this electronic medium.

Likewise, the opposite but equal reaction should be that we pull back from our screens, wipe the nose-prints off, and start giving our phones the side-eye, because a screen addiction is like a drug addiction – you don't think it's a problem when it is.

The last post discussed how Motive and Patterns can be used as brain tools, to help feel your way around AI deception, such as audio/video deep fakes. Of course, these tools and others have been used for thousands of years. They are not perfect and can sometimes lead to incorrect conclusions, where direct evidence is lacking. Unfortunately, many innocent people have gone to jail in the past, convicted on weak evidence and strongly assumed motive in the minds of the people of the jury. This is why the US court system is based on "innocent until proved guilty".

AI can actually muddy the waters of true evidence, depending on what its human programmers tell it to accept or reject, and depending on the unscrupulous methods of those who control what most folks watch on their screens. One way it may muddy the waters of evidence is that it may be programmed to read through thousands of pages of viewpoints and conclude based on quantity alone that the most frequent viewpoint it finds is the correct one, where in fact sometimes the truth is simply an unpopular thing to write about, thus causing a truth shortage in the literature.

People will make assumptions, and people will program AI.

(3-27-24)

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Go Ahead, Say It

Have you ever had a disagreement with someone, and then you think "I guess I'll make it a point to never say anything that might possibly offend anyone ever again."

But if you do that, then think of the number of agreements and compromises that could have been had, the number of misunderstandings cleared up, the number of brand-new understandings that could have occurred. So, over-reacting is not the way.

We wonder today why the country is so divided. Most people won't talk about the difficult things, unless they know the person already agrees with them! And that doesn't build any new bridges where they're most needed: over difficult territory.

Of course, there are some people that you just can't talk with, about certain subjects. But there are some you possibly can. If you sense that your conversational partner is one of those more open folks, you can go ahead and try.

I'm not talking about vomiting out an opinion and then saying "There you have it." On the contrary, I believe there are ways to say most anything, in a non-offensive manner.

Ask neutral interview-type questions such as "What you think about XYZ these days?" or "What do you think might have caused it to be that way?" or "What do you think they ought to do about that?" Your conversational partner might then proceed to lay out some beliefs that you disagree with. But remember, people are itching to talk about certain difficult things, and this could be the start of a new bridge.

When they finally ask you, "What do you think?" You might say, "Well, I'm just going to set this on the table for you to consider, take it or leave it, I'm just interested in what you think about this..."

At this point you must have some specific and preferably documented evidence to politely present, not just your opinion.

If the person still disagrees with you, thank them for engaging, and you might add that it's refreshing to be able to speak with someone about important things like this, even if there's no agreement on that issue itself, because the more important bridge is the mutual respect for one another as human beings. And because of that, there's bound to be other things that you do agree on.

Some leftover ideas from this article just above:

A person might think it unusual that you are being so complimentary. Then you might say "It might seem unusual that I speak this way, but I think I'm kind of old fashioned and that I believe not enough of these things are genuinely communicated today."

Remember, real evidence is not true just because it is widely accepted, but it might be widely accepted because it is true.

I have the most respect for those that can handle a polite attempt to bridge a gap on XYZ. And even if no bridge is built there, a mutual respect in the end is a bridge in itself.

If you doubt someone's conclusion, you might say "I think there might be some more factors involved here" but for sure, be ready to cite those factors, in a polite way.

Of course we don't want to offend anyone, but many of us have a burning need to say what's on our minds, along with a desire to help others. As you can see, this is a fine line.

Perhaps the country's not as divided as we think. I pick up that most people just want to get along with one another. But they see/hear/read people in the news making demeaning remarks about others, and then think,

“Oh now I can’t talk about that with anybody, unless I know ahead of time that we agree.”

I think people are itching to talk about certain difficult things.

If you ooze politeness, it is possible that, even if your conversational partner becomes irritated with you, your politeness will later cause a pause in their mind, allowing them to at least disagree respectfully.

Despite all my practice with this, (a) practice does not make perfect, and (b) there are still folks out there that will perceive me as a verbal offender just from politely mentioning something on their bad list.

So, go ahead, say it – politely. Odds are you’ll be surprised at how few people you offend.

Of course, you might not be able to do it at work, since some people get offended just by a subject being brought up, no matter how polite you are.

Look at the motive behind the claim. What a lot of people do unfortunately is they start inserting their own preferred assumptions when thinking about motive. These preferred assumptions come from a person’s Analytical System Structure (ASS).

Rationalizing, we gloss over the possibility of having our own prejudices, just like a person might say, “Oh that’ll never happen”. At the very least, having that thought should set off the jinx alarm.

Some have a more skeptical nature, some are overly trusting. The best way to be is skeptical, but in a good-natured way, making sure that people earn your trust. Instead of “cautiously optimistic”, I would be “skeptically optimistic” and if the situation calls for it, “suspiciously optimistic”.

(3/30/24)

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Fallacy & Evidence

Mr. Doe invested money in XYZ. He made a profit on the investment and also his investment ended up helping a person who happened to be a writer, who then wrote a glowing op-ed about Mr. Doe on a popular site.

Someone might say “Mr. Doe had a financial motive to invest in XYZ. But Mr. Doe says his motive is to help others, and not a financial motive. I have heard a lot of people say Mr. Doe lies, therefore I believe there is evidence of Mr. Doe’s sole financial motive.” You see, what happened here is typically just under many people’s radar. It’s a form of mental gymnastics, a form of rationalizing based on two logical fallacies: One, that if many people say it’s true, then it must be true (1). Then add on top of this a second fallacy that if a possible motive is there, then it must be true (2). But we are simply stacking fallacies here, so it should really be double fallacious.

Observe that there’s no physical evidence involved in the twisting, but the person concludes there is evidence anyway. Some might say “Well, the physical evidence is that, if Mr. Doe invested money in XYZ, he stood to gain in their profits.” That’s a possible motive, but not physical evidence of Mr. Doe’s intention. Remember that we’re trying to get evidence of whether Mr. Doe is lying about his intentions.

There might end up being no physical evidence about Mr. Doe’s intentions. The best you may be left with is a red flag, but a red flag is not physical evidence itself.

Motive is like a sign that can point the way down the trail to the physical evidence. But motive is not evidence

itself, which we incorrectly fall into believing (3).

Intention is in a person's mind. Intention: Mr. Doe says his intention is to help people.
Motive is a situational clue to the intention. It can be thought of as "What would most people do in this situation?" Motive: Mr. Doe could gain financially by investing in XYZ. But this does not exclude the fact that Mr. Doe might invest in XYZ to help people, due to a simple desire in his mind. And many people also have this basic human desire. So when asking "What would most people do in this situation?" we might have a positive view of "most people", wanting to help others, or a negative view of most people: simple greed without concern of others. Even if there were numerous surveys indicating most people are greedy, recall that argumentum ad populum (1) is a fallacy because it doesn't mean this one guy thinks like most everyone else.

I recall a "Saturday Night Live" episode with the actor John Lithgow. In one skit, Lithgow kept being complimentary and helpful, but everyone kept perceiving him as sarcastic with ulterior motives. It was a humorous look at how out of style politeness is, but more importantly the psychological misuse of projection.

Mr. Doe's intention might well be investing in XYZ to both help people AND make a financial gain. But we still have not reached the point we can say Mr. Doe is lying about his intentions to help people.

Other point: Is there physical evidence why people say Mr. Doe often lies? Or is this too a matter of "argumentum ad populum" where a small number of people use their megaphone to gaslight the population until they begin gaslighting one another?

Another example of "assuming the worst" occurs in the simple exchange of ideas. Putting ideas on the table for discussion could be perceived as pushing an idea, even when the intention is simply to put ideas on the table.

Try to keep Motive and Physical Evidence clearly separated in your mind. Try to visualize "motive" as a "sign on the trail". Evidence is what you get to at the end of the trail. And if you don't get to the end of the trail, just say "I don't know for sure" instead of being one of those that has to believe they know.

Basically we're trying to tease apart reality from fallacy, because a human's tendency is to surreptitiously slide into believing fallacy when his brain is not on guard. And the logical fallacies are found in the toolbox of the hypocrite.

1 https://www.logicalfallacies.org/argumentum-ad-populum.html
2 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Appeal_to_motive
3 https://lawcorner.in/difference-between-motive-and-intention/

(might put on substack)
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End of Chapter: Hypocrisy

Love

Having mentioned or alluded to love in many parts of this document, it seemed impossible to place it in a category by itself, but I had an idea for an article:
3/17/25 Idea for an article on The Door To Love - reference material

The Door to Love.docx

Your Pet
I think one reason people come to love their pets so much is that most pets don't make near as many harmful assumptions about what's going on in your mind as people do. 4-16-25

Materialism

Our Stuff
Based on the preponderance of stores that specialize in non-essential items, and the shift towards these items even in Walmart, I conclude we have become a knick-knack society, and this is why the mini-warehouse industry continues to grow.

Happiness, Physical vs. Spiritual
If your happiness hinges on the things in this world, the hinges will rust and the door will eventually cease to open.

Mementos
One of the ironies of aging is that you come to a deeper realization that mementos from the past have no meaning in and of themselves, and instead, it is the spiritual connections that last forever. Yet those mementos seem to evoke more emotion than ever. This is probably because the mind grieves the loss of the times associated with those mementos. But this is one of the child-like aspects of the mind that must be let go, so that we can place more focus on the happiness of those everlasting spiritual connections.

Having Them vs. Loving Them
One way that God teaches us the difference between wants and needs is that we often seem to get by with whatever He allows us to have, even when we think we need more. Of course, this one lesson doesn't apply to all situations. Another way is God teaching us that what we have, is not going to be necessary in the afterlife. I think this is what Jesus meant by "it is easier for a camel to fit through the eye of a needle than a rich man to enter Heaven". Hopefully, those who have a lot of possessions realize the folly of loving these possessions, before the very last minute.

Effort
One of the ways of reducing frustration in your life is not only to realize that we can't all be rich and famous, but also that your true value is not in riches nor fame, and to be happily satisfied with this thought. Unfortunately some are not willing nor able to try this.

Ego
Unfortunately, some people have their egos tied up with what they incorrectly believe are material facts.

The Fix
Don't buy anything unless you can a) repair it yourself, or b) afford to pay exorbitant sums of money for someone else to fix it.

Money
I suspect that beyond basic needs, the more likely someone is *made happy* by more money, the more likely they are more materialistic. But someone with a lot of money might be happy for spiritual reasons, regardless of the money.

So the key here is the *cause* of happiness, not the amount of money someone has. Having more money doesn't cause more materialism, selfishness does. In fact, more money can be used to help more people.

Happy for Others
If you can be happy for others when they are rewarded for virtuous work, your mind is probably in the right place.

Materialism vs Material Success
For better or worse, there are *many* mindsets that promote success in business. Here are two of them: One is the mindset that does not have much of a conscience.

The other is a mindset with a conscience, but where the mind has given the self-punisher (the *destructive* part of the superego), up to God, and thereby accepts whatever God has for him, be it famine or feast; and in return is filled with an indescribable satisfaction, that causes a relaxation of the mind, yet at the same time the immense fortitude to be able to bravely power ahead into doing good and right things, all the while making sure to give the credit to God, so the engine keeps running. This second mindset produces a more ethical success.

My Way?
I wonder if some people have low self-esteem & feel unworthy of success unless it is on their own terms. They feel they must blaze their own trail or follow no trail at all. This reminds me of the Elvis Presley tune "My Way". However, reality shows us that most people must eventually follow some kind of trail that someone else basically blazed previously. So for many, expectations are too high in the beginning. We can begin to see the joy in making our way up a previous trail, which is perfectly honorable, or we can lament the fact that we were not the first, and continue to be unhappy about it.

Working with elderly people in the early 1990's was where I finally saw the value in good old plain daily talk, embracing the stability and secure feeling of it, even though others might call it mediocrity. Success should be "God's Way" anyway. (4/4/21)

Tabulation Happiness
A guy I've known for a long time but don't talk to very often, recently told me "I have 12 grandkids". I said "That's great", and we talked some more. I told him about my two boys, and that no, I don't have any grandkids at this time. Then after a few minutes he said again "I have 12 grandkids", but it seemed oddly that he was kind of bragging.

Thinking back to when he and I used to see each other more often, I realized he did seem to brag about some things now and then. But a part of me does really yearn to have grandkids. Fortunately the Lord caused me to go up to the orbital view of things, and placed the thought in my mind that "It's not about the number of grandkids. It's about being thankful for what the Lord has given you."

My mind then went to those certain elderly people I have seen in nursing homes, who eventually passed away with no family whatsoever. I realized that this principle of thankfulness for what the Lord has given you, should apply in the minds of people like this, as well. We can be thankful for our own family yes, but we should not compare things nor people in this world, to attempt to achieve a tabulation type of happiness, a type of "point game". Ultimately we should instead be thankful for what the Lord has given us, even if it is nothing in this world, because other than that, it is Heaven, which is beyond any comparison. (6/5/21)

Obtain vs. Abstain

A large part of human life is taken up by what I call "stuff management". There are those whose primary economic theory is (A) to "Abstain" from buying more stuff, and others whose main theory is (B) to "Buy" or Obtain more stuff.

Now, to "Maintain" (M) your stuff is a qualifier that could be used with either A or B. For example, A-M could mean you do the maintenance on your items so they last longer and keep you from having to buy more stuff. B-M it could mean you do the maintenance on your stuff, it lasts longer, but you buy more stuff anyway.

All 4 of these can be overdone, but in America we have only to look as far as the booming mini-warehouse industry to see which one is the vastly most popular theory. (10/1/22)

Comparisons to Others

Sometimes we can't see what's in front of us because we keep looking beside us. (5/25/23)

Subtopic: Envy

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Check Out This New Resort

One of the flawed facets in human nature is envy. We are usually more concerned about sadness or anger in our lives, but if we think about it, envy can be the culprit behind a lot of sadness and anger.

What are the mental mechanics of breaking free of envy?

The first step is something that just happens to many, but not everyone. Over time, a person becomes sick and tired of feeling the deep frustration from envy. No matter what you have, there is always someone else who has more.

The frustration doesn't do any good, and the person knows envy is wrong anyway.

Like being sick and tired of being alone can motivate us to go out and meet people, this frustration with being frustrated can be the catalyst to break the cycle. We want to give up the envy.

What do we replace it with? Giving up a chunk of a mental mindset means finding a replacement. It's the way the mind works.

Many historical teachings as well as new scientific studies tell us that lasting (not fleeting) happiness comes from being thankful or grateful. (1)

Resort to the major message in these writings.

Think “thanks.” Can you be deeply thankful, and envious in the same instant? You might be able to flip between the two, but both cannot occupy the forefront of your mind simultaneously.

Effort: Strive to keep the flashlight of your mind on what you are thankful for. A lazy mind will not succeed here.

If you are thankful, it is because you already have something that you are thankful for. This is the opposite of envy, where you are not thankful since you don’t have something. How is your mind going to manage this one-eighty?

There are several parts to this answer.

Go through the mental “what if’s” such as, “What if I didn’t have a roof over my head? What if I was in constant pain like a lot of people?” And so on.

But more importantly, and this might not be you, but I find the most satisfying and impenetrable thankfulness in my spiritual situation. My real value is not in the worldly things that are the basis of envy.

These mechanics are an ongoing practice and you will be surprised at your improvement. Eventually when you hear of someone getting into a great situation that you will never have, you will get that “You Go!” feeling of congratulations for them. And that by itself will be a warm welcome feeling that shows you can break free of the point system that envy is built upon.

https://www.health.harvard.edu/healthbeat/giving-thanks-can-make-you-happier

(5/22/24) (Substack 5/29/24)

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Envy & Happy Warrior

The other day I wondered what my old age would have been like with a lot more money. It led to a mental flash of envy, feeling of unfairness, victimhood. Then I began thinking of people like Mother Teresa, as well as some of my hospice patients who were great and kind people, but didn’t have much money.

Yes, money generally makes old age easier. But one of the main things God put us here to learn was that our spiritual lives are more important than our physical surroundings.

Another is that while we’re here, we need to help others however we possibly can, which may include being an example of a “happy warrior”, serious about getting things done but explaining yourself in a matter-of-fact friendly and holding-to-Biblical-principle type of way, that this tough thing has to be done so it might as well be done with a grateful and happy thankfulness to the Lord. (9/22/22)

Envy & Thanksgiving

I’ve heard it said jokingly, “He who ends up with the most toys, wins.” But there is some aspect of human nature that causes many of us to believe it, either subconsciously or outright. Through the decades I have come to see at a higher level that (A) he who ends up with the most toys, still ends up leaving them behind; (B) there will always be someone else with more toys; (C) life lived in frustration and envy is a waste of precious time, and (D) he who ends up thankful in spirit, wins. (1/14/24)

Politicians

I see my friends through the same lens I see my favorite politicians – when they have an advantage, I say “You go!” 6-25-24

End of subtopic: Envy

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The Little Run-down House

As a former hospice RN, I was invited into many people's homes. Some of the houses were expensive, some were in a poor state of repair. Most were somewhere in between.

The value of the house generally had nothing to do with the amount of love present in the home. Most families were compassionate and attentive, although there was some occasional variation.

But there was one husband and wife family that my heart especially went out to. The husband had been bedbound for months and when he did say a few words, it was weak, nonsensical, and his eyes remained closed.

His wife was the primary caregiver, changing his diaper a couple of times a day, which was not easy because he was a big guy. Hospice helped when we could, but we were not able to be there every day, or for very long. The couple were about 75 years old.

The wife was especially warmhearted and unselfish, and radiated a caring demeanor more so than most caregivers. I seem to recall a cross on the wall, and she did make remarks about previously going to the church down the street, although unable to do so at that time due to being busy caring for her husband, and she had no car. She did say that people from the church came to visit now and then.

But what was so striking was her personality. Through listening to her it appeared she emanated a certain confidence that you just knew was from her strong faith, instead of from any self-confidence. She held her head up and, along with a slight smile and direct eye contact, this body language announced that she was not going to let anything get her down.

She appeared to have readily and pleasantly accepted all the real facts of her situation, with no complaint, and with a calm and steady optimism that everything was ultimately going to be alright.

The 2 bedroom house was in a poor state of repair, but kept clean. The concrete stairs leading about 20 feet up to the house curved around and were poorly formed, slanted in places, and mis-shapen with some stairs much higher than others.
The wallpaper on the walls and ceiling was so old it had turned brown, with some areas darker than others, and in some places was totally missing. The linoleum floor and the paint on the doors were in similar shape. The lamp in the bedroom had no shade on it.

I can't be sure, but it felt like the small house being in the condition it was, may have played a part in the wife's acceptance of her situation. But instead of being angry about it like some choose to do, she made the decision to focus instead on the love she had – spiritual and human. And it seemed that somehow she was able to ramp up and increase the intensity of appreciation for what she already had, and was content with it.

That choice that she had made, and the tenacity with which she stayed staunchly with it, was so admirable that it seemed like she emanated some kind of light – not visual, but a light from the heart that could be felt and not seen.

She was in the middle of a full set of circumstances, some of which I will never know, but that I suspect all helped shape her mindset and convictions.

Whenever I visited, I felt a deep respect well up in my mind, like I was visiting Mother Teresa. And it may seem odd for a regular guy like me, but it looks like Mother Teresa makes a pretty good role model.

6/25/24 (Substack 6/30/24)

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THINGS AND LOVE

Recalling images of things from the past, like viewing the morning sun near the sign for Sunview drive in Cahaba Heights (where I took morning walks in my 30's, and potential was in the air), pulls and drags back emotional memories. Although things are not love, we mistakenly have an emotional attachment to the things, because of the way our memory works. These things are merely memory triggers.

Your Economic Vote

Every time you buy something, it's a vote. It's a vote that gets sent to the manufacturer, telling them you like their product better than anyone else's, at the price you paid for it. When everyone gets to do this, it's a free market economy.

When everyone gets to vote on a ballot, that's democracy. So a free market economy could be thought of as a democratic economy, where every purchase is a vote, and everyone gets to vote.

But like politics, buying stuff at the store is sometimes a choice of "the lesser of several problems." In the case of purchases, the price is too high or the quality is too low. Or, you might not like what a company does with their money, even if they do have the better product at the right price.

Watching prices, quality, and company behavior over the past 50 years or so, I've seen a trend that people are not using their economic vote wisely.

People continue to spend too much because they see ads on TV and don't think to try something else, or they buy based on "name recognition", or hear on the news that a company is doing something bad, yet continue to buy the product anyway because they want the best for themselves while not caring if the company treats people unfairly. So again like politics, if people cast their vote the wrong way they will continue to get more of the wrong stuff.

Boycotting products has worked in the past, if enough people get on board with it. Boycotts actually use the free market to force a company to change its behavior, prices or quality. But again, I've watched this consumer malaise develop where people don't care to band together on principle in the short run, and sacrifice so things will improve in the long run.

It's another effect of World War 2 fading into the distant past. In WW2, everyone in the US felt a high enough adversity that they banded together and sacrificed to defeat the common foe. This attitude was used by the public in their free market at the time, as people felt that trust in companies needed to be earned. That attitude was passed on to subsequent generations, but decreasingly.

So ironically, adversity is one part of the answer, and banding together is the other part. Some cataclysmic event will probably have to happen before we might get back to voting correctly in the free market.

It's a trade-off. Like my favorite economist, Thomas Sowell, says: "At what cost?" As corporate behavior worsens (including pricing, quality, and other behavior), most people will put up with the bad behavior in order to get the best product for themselves. Others are more principle-minded and will go with a company that behaves better, even if the product is not better, in effect casting an economic vote against those with bad behavior. And like politicians, usually dollar votes are the only ones they pay any attention to. (2/15/26)

End of Topic: Materialism

Misunderstood

Pretty Much a Given
No matter what you do right, there is always someone around who will misunderstand it. (I had written this years ago, then later heard the song “Fly” by King’s X, which pretty much says the same thing.)

Repeating Myself
Contrary to the popular beliefs of those who know me, I have a real disdain for repeating myself. But I have a greater disdain for being misunderstood, which I have noticed happens about 50% of the time if I don’t repeat myself. Alas, I’m a better communicator with computer keyboards than vocal cords.

Assumption

Part of realizing God is in control is being unassuming. In fact, sometimes I over assume that I should not assume anything. This has caused me (in the opinion of others) to ask too many questions, or to ask the same question in different ways (although asking the same question in different ways gets results and is often used in the court system).

It irritates those people who are more assuming, and who think I ought to take the hint and go with it, while instead I am standing there insisting on a level of clarity that they believe is unnecessary. On balance however, being unassuming has served me better in most cases, preventing me from getting bit where I sit.

Adversity, Limits

Sometimes adversity comes from being misunderstood. We can then work harder to be understood, but at some point we must realize we might be casting our pearls before swine.

Reserved

Sometimes with some people, the less you say, the less you will be misinterpreted.

Sacrifice

Sometimes when you resist evil, you will endure hardship in the physical world. The Bible says this, but there's nothing like the deeper realization you get when it happens to you.

Insisting vs. Offering

Whether a communicator is perceived as insisting on something, versus offering something, is sometimes due to the sensitivity of the perceiver, which can, like most anything else, be overdone. But it seems that nowadays it is more popular to fault the communicator for being pushy, which fits with the recent popularity of the victim mindset.

Show Off

One irony is that when you try to look better than average by showing off, you end up looking worse than average. People can often pick up on the genuineness of an action, often able to tell if it is done for self-benefit.

But like everything in this world, human perception is not always perfect. People may be fooled by good actors, or on the other extreme, they may see selfishness in a person when that person is actually a guilt feeler and feels like he does not deserve to succeed. There is misperception either way.

Don't Get Me Wrong

Anything anybody says can be taken wrong by another human being. You need to remember this in your heart because unexpectedly, someone will take you wrong at some important point.

First, ask yourself if there's anything you could have said or done differently, but don't be too quick to lay full blame on yourself. And, if there is anything you could have said or done differently, remember it is impossible to think of just the right thing on the spot every time. You may well have already done the best you could at the time.

Replies to Misunderstanding

Have you ever known someone that takes you wrong, seemingly on purpose so they can reply to you like you're the idiot? For example, If I say "You look nice today" and you say "What does that mean, I didn't look nice yesterday? Or I won't look nice tomorrow? What are you trying to say here?" (Credit to Stefan Molyneux for that example.)

And, have you ever known someone who does it to some people and not others? So when this happens, you need to reply, "Yes, I've known that part for a long time but what I'm really talking about is…" or, "Right, but what I'm really talking about is…"

One Reward

For many of us, being fully understood will be a reward ceremony that takes place primarily in Heaven. This

could be seen with disappointment or optimism. I choose optimism.

I'll Fly Away

I'm tired of making mistakes, and I'm tired of being misunderstood. This sounds depressing, but for the time being, at least this intolerance can be a motivator to work even harder. At some point though, the fatigue will overwhelm, at which point the defense will rest, and then I may be increasingly misunderstood until the Lord decides to let my spirit get the heck out of Dodge.

Proactive vs. Reactive

There are different types of nourishment we need in the physical world. One of mine is the need to talk with others about the grave problems that lurk ahead, and try to find solutions. However, this appears to be a time of famine for this food, because not too many people I know, wish to have these conversations. (2018)

2021 update: Interesting how this year and last year, with covid19, there were suddenly a lot more people around who are willing to talk about society's problems. Ironically this has lifted my spirit in a way, because these are the types of problems I like to try to solve, in conjunction with others. I guess in 2018, this societal problem-solving was considered mostly proactive. Now there's a lot of reaction going on. (**2021**)

Sensitivity

Remember, don't call attention to a person's problems. Don't "bring it up" unnecessarily, even if your aim is to help them feel better, because it can and will be so easily interpreted differently than you mean it. Whether it be misinterpretation on their part, or poor word choice on your part, seek to avoid that situation altogether. You will do well to simply assume they are over-sensitive.

Communication

It is sad, but when communicating with some people, the more you can restrain your playful spirit, the less likely you will be misinterpreted. Some people simply don't like to see you having a good time, for some convoluted psychological reason.

Misinterpreting Christianity

Sometimes, people who are not Christians create the appearance of a contradiction in the Bible by using the old technique of taking words out of context. For example, they will say "The Bible says thou shalt not kill, and so it must be a sin to kill someone even in self-defense, right?" They ignore the larger context of the Bible, which indicates that it is acceptable to defend the innocent with deadly force, against a would-be killer. ("Deliver them from the hand of the wicked." Psalms 82:4)

Also, Christianity may be a hard sell because of the misperceptions of non-believers. They may say, "Christianity appears to teach that it is a sin to enjoy things in this world." Answer "No, there are things that are sins and things that are not sins, in both the physical and spiritual worlds. We can rightfully enjoy the non-sins in both worlds. But self-worth based on the physical world is like a roller coaster with an extreme fear at the end, whereas self-worth based on the spiritual world is at a constant calm level, and lasts forever.

Cycles of Misunderstanding

Sometimes you will be misunderstood in some very important conversations, and sometimes 2 or 3 of these might happen over a short period of time, as the law of averages shows us that things go in cycles. But don't let one cycle of misunderstanding get to you. This is just the way life is on earth, that we will sometimes be misunderstood, sometimes during an important conversation, and sometimes several of these will happen in a row.

The most you can do is rewind the mental video and introspect, take stock, see if you have been angry about something else recently, or otherwise lost a chunk of humility somehow and some anger could be leaking through unrealized.

If so, that still may or may not be the reason for the misunderstanding, but do give any anger up to God because it only causes problems if you continue to carry it with you. And don't feel guilty, except just long enough to provide the motivation for you to fully drop that anger so that God may take it up and turn it into a

positive, which only He can do.

Give thanks to Him. It's at this point that the same energy that powered the anger, turns into a simple calm determination to do good and right things. (1/1/21)

Drama

I am just tired, of the manufactured drama. (5/27/21)

Might Be the Other

Sometimes we are misunderstood because we knew to be more careful, but out of laziness, we were not. Sometimes we are misunderstood regardless of anything we could have known to do at the time. Don't beat yourself up for the former when it really may have been the latter. (1/22/23) (substack **1/22/23)** (Slight edit 1/21/26)

Watchdog Philosophy

Things that set you apart from most others can be generally perceived as good or bad. One thing that sets me apart is that I'm naturally an extreme troubleshooter. I'm skeptical about climbing on bandwagons. I'm sometimes the only one in a group who says wait a minute – what if this bad thing happens? I'm ready to differentiate between what we see immediately as a great thing, and what could be lurking inside the Trojan horse. Therefore, my comments are sometimes seen as a damper on the prevailing enthusiasm.

I'm sometimes viewed as someone who focuses on the negative, so will magically cause this negative thing to happen. For example, I'm skeptical when someone says "It's all good!" because I don't know if that optimist means the limitless good that God can make come from the bad, or the good that humans say we can do, which is limited and might not really be good after all.

I suspect people make too many generalizations and assumptions and carelessly throw them around in conversation, so I might ask what's perceived to be a bunch of unnecessary questions, because I insist on clarity without assumption-making.

I suspect that when people look distracted, they don't fully understand what I said, so I repeat myself, sometimes to the point of being annoying.

However, history has shown that for a free society to survive, there must be a few watchdogs scattered through it, even though they may be perceived as the bearers of bad moods. Of course I realize that people see me as over-doing the warnings, like the boy who cried wolf. However, some will always see it that way, regardless. But while striving not to over-do it, I still believe I was meant to serve in this watchdog function for a reason, to warn of the bandwagon coming up on a cliff.

In summary, history shows that disasters occur when the watchdogs are thought to be simply bearers of negative energy that put a damper on the party. (3/11/23) (Substack 3/11/23) (moderate edits **1/23/26**)

Troubleshooters

It takes certain kinds of people to make a society work. And for some of them, their mantra is this: The reason we look for trouble, is to get rid of it. (7/1/23)

The Depth

Sadly, there are those who find themselves so uncomfortable in life (mentally or physically) that they are hardly able to muster up the "give" part of the old saying "the more you give, the more you get". But it's impossible to know whether the depth of their discomfort renders them helpless of any ability to muster a way out. 8/12/25

Sad

Occasionally I get some subtle feedback that indicates I'm being perceived as bragging or pushing a point, when I tell someone how I succeeded at something. Instead, I'm trying to let them know how they can succeed as well.

After living in this world 68 years, it's become abundantly apparent that some people are just going to perceive others that way. It's sad because there could be a lot of great advice shared and a lot more success attained without this social roadblock.

It looks like people in general have become more overly sensitive and insecure in just the past few decades. I chalk it up to my old theory that most people in the US now don't have enough real adversity in their lives to make them put away their petty disagreements and work together against some common foe. Instead there's all this infighting. 2/12/26

End of Chapter - Misunderstood

MUSIC

Music
Back in my 30's when I had a keyboard, I used to tinker around on it and come up with songs. But a few years after getting married, I stopped working on original music because life got busier. I do recall there was a sort of grief period of several months after letting go of creating music, but overall I was very happy to do it, trading that time for family time, which I will never regret!

Natural High
One thing I miss about playing music in a band are those moments when everything's fitting together so well, it feels like a simultaneous testosterone/dopamine/endorphin rush, and your mouth kind of opens and your brow furrows, and your muscle movements are as sure as the sun comes up in the morning, and you're instinctively sure what your next movements will be. Interestingly I have had some exercise workouts in the past where this has occurred, but it happened more often with playing music. Nowadays, sometimes when simply listening to some music it might get kind of close for a few seconds, but not quite the same.

Blues
Not only tastes change but musical preferences also. For many decades I never understood why people liked blues music. But in the past year, it has become my favorite, I think possibly related to the down to earth feel of it, the lack of pretentiousness. (~2020)

Lyric
To me, "See you later" is a spiritual thing.

Work or Play
Although working in a successful band can be hard work, there is still that mental reward that has led to the widely accepted terminology of "playing my instrument" as opposed to "working my instrument".

Band Names
I never got out of the habit of thinking "Hey that would make a good name for a band". Here are a couple:
Dam Bamboo – Thought of this when remembering what a pain it was to deal with the bamboo patch in our back yard on Glass Drive.
Critics – We're always hearing "Critics say…"

There's a ZZTOP tune called "I Need You Tonight". In the studio version, underneath the lead guitar, the rhythm guitar sometimes contains some harmonics that, for some strange reason reminds me of that patchouli perfume that was popular for girls to wear when I was in high school.

End of topic: Music

Nutrition

Rule 52
Rule of life number 52: Messy food is better. (~1993)

Different Source
When deciding whether or not to eat extra food, think “Get satisfaction from a different source” such as recalling the feeling during exercise, the feeling of having a smaller waist, the feeling of meaningful conversation with someone, the feeling of exercising your art such as a musical instrument, etc.

Big Picture on Nutrition
One interesting thing about nutrition: For me, if I eat a lot over the course of a few days, my mind feels more relaxed, calm, and sure. For some reason, the descriptive term “thick” comes to mind. Then if dieting for a few days, I feel a little more nervous, shaky, and words don’t come to mind as smoothly. Of course, the brain is an organ just like the others. But it is sensitive to glucose levels and fatty acid accumulation in the myelin sheaths.

However, longevity research has shown that if an animal maintains at, or just below, its ideal body weight, it will live longer due to the concept of “calorie restriction” which affects lifetime insulin and oxidation levels among other things. So, there we have it again, another example of the short run advantage being at odds with the long run advantage. Beyond a certain point, more calories is a higher risk for mortality.

Now, with regard to hunger, the only reason I haven’t got tired of cheese sandwiches every day is because by the time I get around to eating it, I’m starving. What allows me in turn to get to this point, is that I am so busy much of the day that eating gets put off. But more important is the mind stepping back and asking “Is this

stomach hunger or mouth hunger?" Or, "Has my stomach growled yet or not?" This is one sensory perspective component in not only losing excess weight but also keeping it off, to the degree that a person can continue to practice this objective view without slacking off from it. And this in turn goes into psychology.

Having a bachelor's in psychology and later becoming a Registered Dietitian, I saw in the 1990's that the missing ingredient in keeping the weight off was psychology. One motivational component of this would be getting the client to spend more time imagining what it would be like to their loved ones if the client were to die early or become an invalid early in life, because of a diet related disease such as heart disease or stroke, and even some forms of cancer. The client would be counseled about connecting the motivation of the emotional heart to avoiding this situation. However, no one really listened to me about this. Now in early 2020, there appears to be a company called Noom that is going nationwide with the psychology aspect of weight loss. I wish them the best, because people have needed it for a long time. (~ February 2020)

Donut Do It

Compare these two types of satisfaction:

The memory of eating a donut now.

The memory of saying no to the donut and then later feeling good about saying no, and thanking yourself for making that decision.

Dwell on both memories for a while, feeling each one. On the second one, you may come to realize that you can either have the donut, or you can have a slightly slimmer waist & healthier arteries. And which one helps you serve other people better?

(1/8/23)

Holiday!

Ironically, part of sticking with something long-term includes taking an occasional vacation from it. We know this is true with our jobs, but the same truth can be applied to diets. Just like working too many days in a row causes burn-out, we can get burnt out on a diet if we don't take a small vacation from it. Of course, diet success is a matter of degree, so the smaller the "diet holiday" the better. But don't exclude those diet holidays all together. (3/8/23) (Substack 3/10/23)

Uncontrollable

Nutrition, like most anything else a human being deals with, has its controllables and its uncontrollables. Everyone knows this, but what's widely unknown is that people have significant differences in the strength of their food cravings, so what is fairly controllable for one person is practically uncontrollable for another.

Appetite has both genetic and learned components. It's hard to tease these apart in many cases. (2025)

Substitute

One thing that has helped me when trying not to eat too much, is first to *recognize* that split second where the decision is made either to open the fridge and grab some additional food, or to *not* do it. Shine the light on that split second, because that's the make or break decision time. And the more you practice this *recognition*, the easier it gets.

Once you realize you are at that crossroads instead of just on autopilot driving through it, about to take the same old turn, You can say, "Substitute!"

What are you going to substitute for some really tasty food that makes you feel good for a few minutes? For me, it's "some helpful activity" – something that helps some person. And the person it helps could also be you.

I've found myself numerous times standing at the fridge with the door open and thought "Substitute – what else needs to be done that can help someone, including me? The dishes need to be put in the dishwasher - I need to process all my emails – I need to clean out my car – I want my spouse to see how I cleaned up the room – I need to send a text to one of my friends – and on and on.

You might be thinking "Those ideas are no match for a bowl of chocolate ice cream" but once you break away and start the helpful activity, the food urge drops, and a different type of satisfaction hits you. And the more you do it, the better you get at it.

One reason it works is because if a person has already eaten, then stops for about 5 minutes, the hunger

mechanism naturally diminishes, especially if the person is involved in doing some other activity. But it should be only one of several strategies in your overall plan. Others might include sipping on a zero calorie beverage between meals, such as a lightly flavored water; remembering to never go grocery shopping while hungry because you will buy more temptations to put in the fridge or pantry; increasing your awareness of whether you are “mouth hungry” or “stomach hungry”; eat more fiber foods and less sugar foods; make small but permanent diet changes over time so you don’t feel too deprived too quickly and fall into a rebound; and many others. (3/15/26)

End of topic - Nutrition

Oversimplification

Percentages

When trying to resolve problems, we sometimes use percentages. But we must be careful to use percentages with long-term history & science as guides and not just short-term history or idealism. Sometimes people mistakenly believe in a solution simply because percentages were used. However, using a tool in the wrong way leads to the wrong solution, which is really no solution.

“Righteousness of the Underdog” Fallacy

There is no inherent righteousness of the underdog. A person is not right about something simply because he or she is weak, a victim, or an underdog. Victims should receive appropriate care, but what they say or do should be assessed on the merits of their words or actions alone, and not re-flavored by their victimhood. History is replete with examples of why we should heed this warning. The “Righteousness of the Underdog” fallacy is another example of conflation, or oversimplified thinking, that fails to look into the specifics of each case.

Caring vs. Careful

Be both caring and careful. They are not the same. This is another opportunity not to oversimplify and erroneously assume that if one is present, the other is also.

Outward appearances

The dangers of overgeneralizing cannot be overstated. For example, we feel delight in our hearts when we see the faces of our loved ones. But we should not overgeneralize that a face we are attracted to, should cause delight in our hearts.

Generalizing vs. Differentiating

Quite often, the difference between a mature thinker and a child-like thinker is that the first one differentiates, while the second one “lumps in” things with other things, or over-generalizes. A mature thinker is able to see more separate details, while a child-like thinker doesn’t believe all that.

Of course, we must retain some aspects of child-like thinking such as trust, wonder, curiosity, and some of the positive emotional functions. But we must let go of other child-like thoughts such as magical thinking, overgeneralization, oversimplification, short fuse emotion, etc. as we mature, so we can better help other people.

A Good Judge of Character

Not only should we not judge a person like a book from its cover alone, but we should avoid the subtle self-deception of thinking we can always judge someone by seeing only a few pages of the entire book. Yes, we should be cautious, but at the same time without supposing that we know it all.

Love, Trust, & Agreement

Love and Agreement are not the same thing. But love is better. And, there can be emotion that is not based on physical action, such as unconditional love. But where child-like thinkers go wrong is they pair their trust with emotion. Their wiring tells them to oversimplify. So if they love someone, they automatically trust them. Actual real-world experience shows us that love and trust may overlap in many cases, but they are not the same.

For example, I love someone who I would not always trust with my checkbook. We have different ideas about buying stuff. But the Love motivates us to find ways to get past these disagreements. One way is realizing that Trust is not Love, and Trust must be earned over time, using Reason. And there are many more facets than these, to human relationships.

Flexibility, Differentiation

Jesus said “I did not come to bring peace, but a sword,” which is seemingly contradictory to “Turn the other cheek”. But no, there is a time for each one.

Willing vs Able

There is quite a difference between Willing and Able that bears dwelling on from time to time, because people tend to slip into conflating the two together. You can have one without the other.

Passion, humility, anger

We should not overgeneralize that passion is always good. Your passion is like a hammer, which can be used to build, or to destroy. Passion needs humility to go along with it, instead of anger. This is keeping in mind that humility is not humiliation, another overgeneralization that we tend to make.

The Truth's In The Details

The older I get, the clearer it becomes that the old saying "The devil's in the details" must have been written by someone in that part of the population who are over-simplifiers, over-generalizers, and who continue to exhibit the childhood belief that "everything in this world should either be simple or it's just not true." I suspect it is this type of person who inspired the other part of the population to come up with the old saying, "Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater." Now, I am not saying that everything is complicated. But using absolutes like "everything" and "always" are quite often, in my opinion, an oversimplification. So while many believe you are getting "into the weeds" with details, many others believe you are "zeroing in" on a solution. (7/6/20)

Grey Area

When a situation falls into a grey area, many people tend to interpret it as one way or the other, instead of the fact that it's in a grey area. For example, you may be forgiven by a person if you make a mistake and then apologize, and they will say "It's ok, he apologized, and we should always be forgiving". But if you keep making numerous mistakes followed by numerous apologies, some may still let the person continue this pattern, themselves making the mistake of conflating forgiveness with submission, failing to see when the situation has gradually moved from one to the other. 12/19/20.

One Example:

One example of oversimplified thinking is when a person latches onto one thing as the only answer, when actually most of the time it's several contributing factors and even then, each of these factors likely fluctuate in time, number, intensity, importance, etcetera. (12/26/20)

Look Out

Quite often it's not the devil who's in the details. But he wants you to think he is. (**2020**) (substack 2/26/23)

Avoiding Oversimplification

Another poorly understood concept is that of "Not Always". Once, I got Kim to use her embroidery machine to make a shirt that said "Not Always", with a Venn diagram above it. Related to this, would be the concepts of: To a Point, Sometimes, Matter of Degree, Diminishing Returns, Negative Returns, and Taking a Good Thing Too Far and Turning It Into a Bad Thing (someone should make up a word or simple phrase for this last one).

Thomas Jefferson once described George Washington, saying "To overdo a thing, with him, is to undo it." Related to this, is the *realization* of when a thing is overdone, but even this depends on the person's goal. For example, Jefferson and Washington both were slave owners. But the over-generalization that we should throw out all their ideas, including their ideas that the public should vote, runs contrary to the idea of democracy. (~2020)

Causation vs. Correlation

So many of today's popular disagreements are based on people confusing causation with correlation. (April 2021)

Unchallenged

One of the big lies today that goes unchallenged, is that if something affects a group of people disproportionately, then it's always due to some abuse or hate from another group, without even looking for other causes. The question must be asked: Are there any statistics showing any other contributing causes? (8/24/21)

Coincidences

I've talked about "The Birthday Problem" as an example that coincidences will happen, we just don't know which ones. Also it seems that a person who is an Oversimplifier will more often assume these naturally occurring coincidences are the result of some nefarious plot. Show him a coincidence, and he'll show you a suspicion. Now this is not an outright denial of possible plots, but Oversimplifiers will jump to a conclusion

without a sliver of evidence, usually before anyone else. So when it does turn out that they happen to be right… oh the glory. You'll never hear the end of it. (3/16/22)

Don't Jump
Don't jump to the assumption that things are always one way or the other. (1/22/23)

Assumption
Try not to suppose anything. But if you must, assign a cautious degree of likelihood to it. Over time, your estimates will improve. (Substack 3/7/23)

Reminders or Blinders
Sometimes some simple reminders are in order because a mindset is a fuzzy thing. One reminder is that we know some things with greater certainty, and some things with less certainty. In our haste, sometimes we forget the difference between the two, and subsequently commence to performing various behavioral blunders. The word "remind" is an appropriately built word. (Substack 9/26/23)

Hallowed
In my opinion, the concept of "hallowed ground" is a brainical illusion, much like an optical illusion. It erroneously links the real physical with the real spiritual in a false way. For example, people are concerned about stepping on a grave site. Considering the extent of human history, I submit that on any given day, many of us walk over grave sites without knowing. For example, the bones of King Richard III of England were discovered under a parking lot in 2013, and apparently no one before that had reported any strange happenings in the parking lot.

People may feel an attachment to a house or land because they or their ancestors lived there, but these are memory, imagination, or emotion triggers.

I think the Lord does link the real physical with the real spiritual in other ways, but the concept of hallowed ground to me is an oversimplification or misunderstanding of this link. (10/6/23)

Black & White
Many assume that if you're in favor of one thing, then you're against the other. That may be true in some cases but quite often there are aspects of both things that someone might agree with. To deny these aspects is to deny truth. 11-5-24

Adults?
There are actual adults out there running companies under the oversimplification that more money and more employees always means more care. 6-15-25

Ockham's Razor
Ockham's Razor basically says that to increase the likelihood of reaching the truth, one should screen out superfluous info and not make more assumptions than the minimum needed. But I might add that while the explanation for a problem may require few assumptions, the solution may require more than that. Or vice versa. So we should not assume that since the problem is simple, the answer will be also.

I have found that, when screening out what I suspect is superfluous info, I need to double check to be sure that it is indeed superfluous after all, so that my opinion of my own intellect is not the thing that is superfluous.

Ockham's razor is like this analogy: You want to know all the facts about the plants in your back yard. You've got 800 square feet of grass, but in one corner, there is a 15 foot wide impenetrable tangle of a blackberry bush, and you can't tell what's behind it. The simple explanation is that there's more of the blackberry bush behind it.

Now, beyond Ockham's razor there are destructive ways and non-destructive ways of getting more facts. A *non-destructive* way to see what's behind the blackberry bush is to ask your back yard neighbor if you can put a ladder in his back yard so you can peer over his fence to see what's behind your blackberry bush.

If he says no, a *destructive* way of seeing behind the bush is to cut a 3 foot pathway through the middle of it.

So you cut through and find there is a blueberry bush back there. But you have changed the facts during your search for the facts. Instead of a 15 foot wide blackberry bush, you now have two 6 foot wide blackberry bushes.

Granted, humans have limited understanding and we need to use such crutches as Ockham's razor to even begin down the path of getting a glimpse someday of a sliver of the truth. But of course we must not oversimplify the faith in our conclusion and think that our answer was always the whole truth, as the blueberry bush showed us.

Some say you can reduce the number of assumptions in your theory, and then have a higher likelihood of reaching the truth. But I think that as you reduce assumptions, you are thinking inside the box more and more, and outside the box less and less. So, it appears for humans at least, there is a *happy medium* number of assumptions we can handle in order for us to get our minds around something.

Of course, minds vary from person to person, and we have only to look at champion chess players who can consider an amazing number of assumptions, in order to find a solution that most of us could not. In other words, you can't just say "That's seems like a superfluous assumption so I will disregard it." You must consider how it will play out first, then discard if warranted. With repeated experience, these decisions will eventually build an intuition, but even that intuition is open to fault at times due to our imperfect understanding of all possibilities.

So in order to find a solution that works for humans, we must shave off some of those assumptions that we deem unlikely. In sports, you have to draw the line somewhere and not have too many rules, or no one will understand how to play.

In economics, a "bottom-up" decision-making model (capitalism) contains the least assumptions and the most facts, compared to a "top-down" decision-making model. In the "bottom-up" model, you have millions of small consumer decisions made daily, which are facts, not assumptions.

For example, after the brand B jelly company hiked its price 10%, 20% of people started buying brand A jelly instead – a fact. This fact is sent to the brand B company who uses it to make an obvious assumption on how to give consumers what they want: lower the price. Or they could go out of business. Thus, they are motivated by the fear of losing customers. So they must give customers what they want.

Conversely, in the top-down (communist-socialist) model, a group of administrators at the top, using the government's money, must endeavor to navigate an insurmountable number of *assumptions* about what consumers want, to get the right number of the right (customer preferred) products to the right locations at the right time for the right price.

We have only to look at history to see how this turned out, repeatedly. Even when the correct simple info was given to these "top down" administrators, human nature crept in and there was laziness and corruption because they had no fear of losing customers. The customers were a captive audience.

Even belief in God fits with Ockham's Razor. The atheist has decided that throughout the universe, vast as it is, with quadrillions of facts unknown to humankind, he knows there is no evidence of God there. This is assuming a lot. At least the agnostic allows for the possibility.

But our minds are limited, so in order to wrap them around a relatable idea of God, simple faith throws out many of these atheist assumptions. There are too many facts in the universe for our limited minds to understand. This is why humankind could not handle the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. We often misinterpret it, while God understands it perfectly. So here, Ockham's Razor for humans seems like a pair of eyeglasses that help a nearly blind person see a little better. (9/19/22) (Substack 5-8-23) (Significant edits **1/23/26**)

End of Chapter - Oversimplification

Perspective Shift

Perception
We perceive some things as wonders because of the God given wonder of human perception. This is different from the human-centric view that God created wonders in such ways that our existing senses would see them as wonders.

Faith and Works
The Bible says that faith without works is dead. Some assume that this wording shows both faith & works are equally important. However, in Matthew 23:23 Jesus addresses that assumption. (2007)

Hope vs Expectation
In this world, hope, but do not expect. Give without expectation of what may happen next. These are true in the physical world, where things are less certain to us humans.

Clarity
May the Lord intoxicate you with the clear mindedness of reality.

Not Me
Romans 7:20 says "It is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me." Reading this, I thought of the analogy of swallowing an irritating substance that is now in you but not part of you. (2007)

Brain Irony
One irony about the human mind is that while it was made to understand things, it doesn't seem to understand itself very well.

Statistics
When you hear a statistic, always ask: What assumptions may have been made here?

Truism
When old sayings become cliché, that is the point of danger.

Practicality
The advantage of owning a low maintenance vehicle for a number of years ought to be publicized like a tax cut.

Agnosticism
An agnostic person may come to believe in God, because while he says there is no proof of God, there is also no proof of not God.

Agnosticism & Faith
The agnostic may ask, "When the wolves are at my back, will I step off the spiritual cliff, hoping to be caught by God?" Those who do not believe, have not yet jumped. Either way, the wolves will close in.

The First Rule
The first rule is, don't put yourself in a situation which causes you to be spanked by reality.

Underestimated
It is good to be…Underestimated. And to a happy medium, it is good to underestimate yourself as well. That way, most surprises are to the upside. However, to go past that happy medium and chronically underestimate yourself to an unhealthy degree, can be just as bad for you as the other extreme.

Forgiveness

The only thing that can save you is feeling forgiven, which you are if you believe it.

Belief Perseverance
Why do some unwittingly continue old scripts learned in childhood, while others decide “that’s not for me”?

Extreme Compassion
Contrary to popular belief, a culture can compassion its way out of existence. This is not really compassion.

Logic vs Emotion
The numbers in your bank account do not change simply because of how you feel.

Matthew 7
Matthew 7 is one of my favorite verses. It talks about hypocrisy, deception, words vs. actions, perspective shift, lost causes, and others. I wonder if somewhere there is a person named Matthew whose middle or last name is Seven.

Righteousness
If we are not self-righteous, we will either be self-condemning, or God-righteous.

The Full Glass Analogy: Accumulation
More is not always better. People and things have their limits. When pouring water into a 12 ounce glass, all that’s required to make a mess is ounce number 13. So, when asked to “Do just a little more”, we might reply, “A little more is okay as long as the glass is not full yet.” Or, in general: “If the glass is already full, a little more makes a lot of mess.” However, they may repeat their argument and then look at you like it makes perfect sense. Their thinking is that “We started with one ounce and there was no mess. We poured another ounce, and again, no mess. We kept repeating this, finally realizing that these ounces are just little things and don’t really make much difference in the grand scheme of things.” On the contrary, the truth is that when limits are reached, one more little thing causes a mess the other little things didn’t.

Also, think of your paycheck as the glass, and your credit card as the water. Spending too much was not the real root of the problem. The root was the assumption that these little things don’t matter that much.

Consumption
Be careful not only with what you eat, but also with what you feed your eyes and ears.

Imagination
As much as I sometimes wish it were not so, my imagination previews to an audience of only one. But really two, if you count God.

Overthinking
Sometimes, the biggest challenge to maintaining our faith is to not overthink it.

Things and Places
Certain impulses are harder to ignore, or reason with. One is the impulse to equate the mementos and places of the past, with the love that occurred during that time. Mementos are merely memory triggers. True love lasts forever, but it does not exist in places and things. And sometimes, not in people either.

Through repeated experience your heart finds out the physical place has no emotion in it. Instead, the emotion came from what happened there, not the place itself. So going back to the place can remind you, but there’s no ethereal connection.

The excitement of seeing the old places is often a false excitement because the value was in the human action that took place there, not the place itself, contrary to what the heart jumps to believe. The old place can serve as a memory trigger and be used in a positive or negative way. For example, love can be recalled, or you may need some limited grieving in order to move forward, but you don’t want to continue wallowing in sorrow or

writhing in anger.

Since we know that a thing has no real emotional value but instead is simply an emotion-memory trigger, it seems like hypocrisy that seeing this place or thing has suddenly evoked this strong emotion. But since it also seems to be a natural pre-disposition like breathing, maybe it is more irony than hypocrisy.

With regard to knowledge, in can be said that it's not the *things* from the past, but instead, the things we *learn* from the past, that are more important.

With regard to service, I recall that when I was younger, I would drive by and look at places like restaurants, car dealers, vacation spots, and think: It would be nice to go there and get what they have: food, a new car, leisure, to look at a house I might purchase one day. Now, it's more about navigating my way around, through, and past these places as a necessity for the real purpose of serving and helping people in some way.

Enabling Reaction

When you reward "not thinking ahead", you get more of it.

Extremes

People can take a good thing too far and turn it into a bad thing. This is true when they stretch the meaning of "the spirit of the law" to where it is no longer recognizable by its original intent.

Expanding Picture

Most of us think that most of us think similarly to how we think, and that those who don't, are stupid. Fortunately, many of us outgrow this. Actually there are many types of intelligence, and correspondingly, many types of stupid. In fact, you might be stupid if you never thought that you were, at some point.

Caution

Be more careful than you think you need to be. This is one thing I used to tell my kids all the time.

Accurately Unknown

In the physical world, when you feel you are about to be rewarded by God for doing a thing, you really do not know it. Feeling you do not know if you will be rewarded, opens the door to His reward. This is similar to "Hope, but do not expect, in the physical world."

Tough Love 1

The giver of tough love is not a perfect person, but the faulty tendency of the receiver is to hold the giver to that perfect standard. When the giver does make a human mistake, the receiver may throw the tough love message out the window, thinking the giver is a hypocrite. The analogy comes to mind, that coaches are not able to play in the game, but they are the best ones to coach it.

Tough Love 2

Sometimes the big picture takes precedence. Sometimes it's better to get certain mental wheels turning instead of continuing the same. Sometimes school of life is more important than continuing to live on a financial razor's edge. At what point are you hurting someone by helping them too much? How much would an addict agree is too much drug? Are you helping someone by depriving them of the hard times that will motivate them to innovate a way out? If bailouts become a pattern, there is an enabler somewhere.

Tough love 3

If someone needs help, help them. But if that help keeps them from seeing what's really going on, then the best help may be letting them find out for themselves. Don't rob them of that clear understanding.

Flexibility

Utilize Flexibility like water: it doesn't stop itself. And when confronted with an obstacle, it attempts to go around or through. Of course, this analogy ends when Rigid Determination is required, in cases where you don't need to take the path of least resistance. In fact, frozen water may be one analogy for Rigid Determination, since

it can even crack concrete over time. But an overall Flexibility is required, in order to know when either Flexibility or Rigid Determination must be increased or decreased in the mix.

Many people may be like water, in their social lives. When times are warm, their thoughts tend to gravitate to easy and pleasurable things; entertainment, trivia. They take paths of least resistance, and they may even pool up in the wrong place. They even lose sight of the coming winter. Then when times are cold, their thoughts are preoccupied with the hard realities of basic needs such as food and shelter.

However, God has given us minds that are able to take the long view, to see ahead and make efforts to prepare for winter, unlike the simple water. Unfortunately, many have chosen not to use their minds.

Fortune
All of us to some degree, have harvested without first cultivating. But not all of us learn, that this cannot continue.

Blame or Course Correction
If your tendency is to blame when something goes wrong, you might blame someone else or end up blaming yourself. Focus instead on a third choice: What to do from now on. This is the forward-looking choice, which allows you to move forward. Also, many people tend to automatically assume there are just two choices every time, so they stop innovating when they come up with only two. (7/7/20)

Things vs Concepts
Something in our brains keeps telling us that what we sense with our bodies is always the most important, even though we have repeatedly learned that it is not always. Concepts, which exist in the brain and elude the senses, are often the most important things. Another day, another irony.

Their Job
The more mature someone is, the more likely they will realize they often don't know squat about someone else's job. So, maturity or manurity, which path shall we choose? (Substack 10/15/23)

Emotional Hypersensitivity
There can be a fact, or there can be a fact that inflates or deflates someone's ego. Let there just be a fact. (substack 1/21/23)

Communication, Happiness
If happiness is only surface, then what is the word for "deeper than happiness"? Is it Joy? Contentment? Satisfaction? It's difficult to convey the difference, possibly because many of us don't see the difference.

Pareto Principle
When you're on a team, and one player is running their ass off helping moving the ball while other players jog around occasionally, staying out of the action, your team loses.

Good Follower
People can be brave, or brave and smart. It depends on who they choose to follow.

Aging, Tough Love
One of the ironies of life is that we are often ungrateful to those who try to realistically prepare us for life, and often when we finally see the depth of their love, too much time has passed.

Forgiveness
Forgiving is sometimes the last thing we want to do, for it means giving up that rock on which we stand, but unbeknownst to us before it breaks off and tumbles down the cliff.

Non-Christian Mindset

Some people's brains just don't run the Christian software.

Levels of Forgiveness
There are different levels of forgiveness, just like there are different levels of eating, sleeping, and crapping. I believe only God can forgive the soul. A physically abused wife may forgive her husband, but this doesn't mean she should let him in the door again. To forgive does not mean to set yourself up for more of the same problem.

Acceptance
There is a strange and ironic relief and relaxing satisfaction God sends to your heart when you finally realize for sure, that much of the passion and knowledge and creativity you have in your mind and heart will likely be never known to other humans even though you had previously wished it were. The relief likely comes from letting go of the sense that you are responsible for passing it along, and instead from just knowing you did what you could at the time, to pass it along to help others.

Irony, Memory
One irony is that we have happy memories of situations that sadly, have passed into the past. This is one of the bittersweet aspects of the human mind.

Redefine Success
One of the best feelings is redefining success as spiritual success.

Success
Thank God I am actually getting better at not defining success (in my heart now) by fame or fortune. It is a very relaxing feeling.

Speed vs. Accuracy
When it comes down to speed versus accuracy, I prefer to fail to be fast. There are situations where speed takes precedence, but in a larger group, I am one who fits better into those positions that require accuracy and not speed. Both speed and accuracy are required in human life. This is one reason God gave us differing talents. However, history is rife with examples where we over-emphasized one at the expense of the other. (might put this on substack)

Abstract Thought
The more you practice thinking in abstracts, the easier it is for abstract thoughts to become concrete in your mind. This allows you to be increasingly motivated by them. It's just one of the ways the brain works, although many never learn this. And as Thomas Sowell indicates, the difference between England and Ireland about 200 years ago was that for some reason, the English more often emphasized thinking in abstracts.

Emotional Intelligence
Taking the high road sometimes has to be its own reward, but it does so quite well. (might put this on substack)

Motivation
As I drove home from work early this morning, it occurred to me that a picture can capture the visual of a sunrise, but it doesn't elicit that feeling of a new and energetic start that makes you take a type of deep breath that says with a smile, "Here we go!" (6/22/20) (might put this on substack)

One Warning
When you don't feel like praying, learn to see that by itself as a red flag. (might put on substack)

Character
Martin Luther King, Jr. talked about content of character. It would be worthwhile for some organization to survey what people believe content of character is, and then present the results in a news story.

Conscience
I wonder if there are any written accounts by British soldiers where they could not bring themselves to shoot George Washington. It seems to me that at least some British soldiers could have felt that the colonists had the moral high ground in desiring their independence. I think a number of soldiers in wars are influenced by this type of conscience issue where obvious circumstances may override what their commanders are telling them.

Anonymous Philanthropy
When you have lost the concern for your good deeds being remembered as yours by humankind, then you are probably setting a good example for humankind.

Reason vs. Emotion
During times of widespread starvation and fear of bodily harm, Feeling gives up the steering wheel and Fact takes over. A Fact such as "I've got to eat, and I don't care how anybody feels about it" becomes the driving force in human behavior and Feeling becomes simply the cheerleader. However, today in the U.S., after many decades of relatively easy times compared to poor nations, in a land where *our* poor people have cell phones and many of them are overweight, facts go out the window and feelings reign supreme. (2018)

Physical vs. Spiritual
Walking along the beach looking at the shell fragments washing up, it occurs to me that with regard to the human body in this world, there is "what's me" and "what's not me". And the part that's not me, way dominates. (July 2018)

Simplicity, Forgiveness, Overthinking
I have written before that I think more mature thinkers are able to more readily see how complicated things are. One of these complications is that sometimes, an answer is simple. So, sometimes the struggle is accepting the simplicity of God's forgiveness, without overthinking it and making it complicated.

Overthinking
It is not good to over nor under use any tool, including the tool of thinking.

Self-Worth
Enjoy this world as God intended, but don't attach your self-worth to it. (might put on substack)

Failure
Failure has many causes in varying degrees. Most obvious are "bad circumstance", or "not enough effort", but less obvious is "continuing effort despite a clear signal to cut your losses and try something different". This is much less recognized and probably falls under the general heading of "poor decision-making", but nonetheless requires a specific realization in order to stop it.

Words vs. Action
Venting frustration has its time and place, but if used without trying to find a solution, it's like putting a band aid on a bleeding gash. Or, it's like hollering when you burn your hand while leaving your hand on the stove. It really doesn't do much good. Action is required in order to change the situation, eliminating any need to vent in the first place.

Procrastination
If something has to be dealt with, it will be dealt with. Thus, some things must physically be relocated to where they have to be dealt with, albeit much to the chagrin of those who must now deal with it.

Relativity
I overheard a speaker phone conversation, where one person described a common occurrence where 2 drivers

disagree and one honks at the other. The conversation then turned to the concept of who "deserves to be honked at." I remarked that for example, during times of natural disasters, episodes of such topical and superficial investigation and scrutiny would likely be fewer and farther between. (late 20-teens)

Aging, Selfishness

Lately, I have been having dreams where I am in a situation where things have deteriorated, like living in a house that has come into a great state of disrepair, or like last night I had to go back to college but I couldn't find my classroom and it was getting on in the semester. I am pretty sure this reflects thoughts of my life on earth at present, where my body is deteriorating from age, and retirement is unsure. But before I got up today I was able to use the freshness of the dream to give me a heading or some possible takeaways or resolutions toward going forward in my earthly life.

1) You can let your heart run free in God's heaven. Previously, I have thought of the analogy of the heart and mind as horse and rider, properly contained along roads and trails that promote productivity here on earth. But it occurred to me that sometimes the horse must be let go to run, and it can always run free in another level which seems boundless but includes the bounds of heaven, because our hearts have a connection to God's heaven. This realization gave me a feeling of relief, that the heart can run free after all, in a huge heaven, while it may simultaneously stay on productive trails on the earth.

2) The "Defender" mindset is going to be there as long as our spirits ride around in these human bodies. When we or those we care about are threatened, we may flip into the Defender mode. The overly simplistic view is that when we defend others, it is altruistic, while defending the self is selfish. The more informed view is that we should defend the innocent, whether that be ourselves, or others. This is complicated by the fact that our definitions of innocence may differ. But we should strive to discuss these definitions with one another. Trying to find agreement on definitions is fast becoming a long-lost art in finding solutions, as more and more people become enamored with changing definitions for their own benefit.

Nonetheless, defending the innocent self can be seen in the context of defending others, especially when it keeps injurious forces at bay in general, protecting others in the process. It is a part of nature.

Look at the ants. From our perspective, they are unselfishly working for the group. Their programming or predisposition is to do this. If any one of them strays and becomes selfish, it becomes cut off from the group and doesn't survive. So it could be that the Defender thought pattern is a part of nature's genetic program to be properly used to work for the group, but can be improperly used, like any tool, against the group as in the case of a serial killer.

So one determining factor of whether something is selfish or selfless, is whether we have a predisposition or even a strong learned affinity to work for the group, even at the expense of the self (altruism). And just as important, how big a group do we try to form, a small clique who will fight other small cliques, never allowing a large effective group to form, or an affinity to form large groups such as the ant colony? We should strive to be like the ants. (~2020)

Foresight vs Hindsight

A good idea would have been to relocate to Byzantium before the fall of Rome. I can only assume that some, with adequate foresight, did. This lesson has serious implications today in the U.S., but I have observed that population levels of foresight have drastically diminished here in the past 50 years, since I have been paying attention to these kinds of things. (~2021)

True Cost

Say to your children: I love you too much to see you hurt by making a bad decision, based on not knowing the true cost of things. (might put on substack)

Motivation

You can feel when you're tired of doing something, but maybe you're just tired of doing it with a certain viewpoint. I imagine cancer survivors can vouch for this change in perspective. (might put in substack)

Trends & Exceptions

The actions of a few do not always tell us the trends of the many. This is hopefully a lightbulb way of saying that the larger the sample size, the more accurate the results, and to be wary of anecdotal so-called evidence. In fact, lately I have become a big fan of using the term "so-called" because I think often we lend credit to unproven ideas by simply not using this phrase.

Innovation
The sea, and most any other thing for that matter, can be either a gateway or a wall, depending on your situation and your innovation. (might put in substack)

Worry
Stay on the path of concern and solutions without stepping off the path into the wilderness of worry.

Reminders
Sometimes one of the most profound things we can suddenly realize, is that we must be reminded of our previous suddenly profound realizations. (might put on substack)

Motivation
Focusing on the history of what doesn't work, may be more important than the history of what works, because the specter of failure can often make us pay greater attention. (might put on substack)

Rosy Retrospection
People will admit to forgetting things like how to do high school math, but will not admit to forgetting any humbling life lessons. Too often is heard the phrase, "I remember what it's like" when actually our memories have been softened by the documented psychological phenomenon known as "Rosy Retrospection". When people get promoted into a managerial position, they forget over time exactly how bad things were on the front lines. They tend to start putting more unnecessary work on the front-line people. There are probably few exceptions to this. (might put on substack)

Fear
Fear is not always a bad thing. For example, the spoiled do not fear. And sometimes, the only thing we have to fear is…a lack of rational fear. Rational fear may trigger a brave and smart response to a threat. (2013)

Purpose of Things
On mine and Kim's anniversary trip, after walking on the beach, it appears the beach has had 4 different purposes in my life so far. First was to have fun while being a kid. Second was to meet girls. Third, for Kim, me, and our kids to have fun together. Fourth, to enjoy with Kim. So it has been looked at through 4 different lenses. Each time I saw the sand and the water, I felt a different purpose for it. But the beach itself hasn't changed. And it's amazing to think of how many years it hasn't. (July 2018)

Flexibility
Our minds are not totally flexible. We have our predispositions, with a little flexibility, like trees swaying in the wind, unlike the wind itself. (might put on substack)

The Questioner
Should the questioner in my mind continue to question things? Yes. But the existence of God? No, there came a point at which I decided the question had been answered. As far as I am concerned, this matches reality.

Skepticism
Today in America we are tasked with an odd thing – we are told that perseverance will lead to success. Yet we are conspicuously not warned to be wary that, if our trail continues to grow cold, we need to seriously consider cutting our losses and switching to another path. The fact that this second part is often left out, indicates a lurking and looming lack of adversity, which brings about overconfidence in a majority of the population, and

makes us ripe for a fall. (mid 20-teens)

Logic and Assumption

I like logic problems like “the Monty Hall problem” and also “the birthday problem”, because they are counterintuitive and it shows people that they should not be so assuming. One of my major gripes in life is people that assume they are correct without a doubt, on things in this world. I won’t go into explaining the Monty Hall problem here. It is easy to find on the web. But here is my way of finally understanding “the Monty Hall problem” (which took me a while), created by Steve Selvin:

At the beginning, the odds are 1/3 you picked the car. After the host opens one door, the odds of your past decision are still 1/3 of having picked the car. Therefore, if you switch, your odds become 2/3 that you picked the car. You are switching from 1/3 to 2/3.

Life lesson: if the odds are that you are going down the wrong path with your 1st choice, and you get a signal that this is indeed is probably where you’re headed, it may be good to switch. The trick is recognizing the signal.

If you’re trying to choose a career, there would be multiple signals to consider, foremost of which are the Historical Examples. For example, in music, early life success is a predictor of greater success, and lack of early success is a predictor you probably won’t achieve great success the rest of your musical career. In this case, it probably would be good to start switching careers by age 22 or so if you’re not already making a good living playing music. I actually waited to about age 30. A bit hard-headed.

Perspective Shift At Will

Those who discover that they can change their own perspectives, are suddenly transported far ahead on the path to maturity. (might put on substack)

Self-worth

Going thru my old papers, it hits me that so many of the hopes that teenagers have, are later dashed. The best advice I have for them is early on to focus on your self-worth coming from your spiritual worth. Your spiritual worth will never be dashed. (might put on substack)

Street Smarts

On the street, if there’s a bad guy and separately another guy, that doesn’t mean the other guy is a good one.

Vigilance

Sometimes the mind gets a little giddy, but our internal watcher must recognize this and see that things and words are not tools for us to manipulate others, but instead to serve others.

Deterioration

Looking down the highway, it strikes me that all these automobiles are in various stages of deterioration. And so are the people driving them.

Gratitude

Gratitude to God unlocks your brain. However, like many things humans do, it gets better with practice. There’s no “One time and I got this.”

Time

We tend to overestimate the resources we have, especially time. (Reminds me of one of my favorite tunes, “Time” by the Alan Parsons Project.)

Morality

There is a right way and a wrong way to think about most everything. Moral and amoral, righteous and sinful, good and bad, selfless and selfish. And to complicate things, one person’s definition of all these will vary compared to others, and sometimes greatly. Respect the complexity of it, to avoid overconfidence.

Assumption: Absolute vs Intermittent

The danger of the Unrealized Assumption (an assumption you don't realize you are making): For example, GDP is a monetary measure of the market value of all final goods and services produced in a period of time. The Unrealized Assumption is that higher GDP is a positive thing because it indicates a better economy.

Often this is true, but not always. A country could borrow more money to pay for entitlements, then the receivers of this borrowed money go out and buy food, medical care, etc., which increases GDP. Increased debt however is not a good thing, and is bad for the long-term economy. The Unrealized Assumption is that increased GDP is ALWAYS a good thing. (Once again, the word "sometimes" is the most underrated word on the planet.)

Another example is average math proficiency in high school students. A country with falling math proficiency in students could decide to make its national standard math tests easier, so scores would go up. Math proficiency scores going up, a good thing, right? The Unrealized Assumption is that math proficiency ALWAYS goes up when math proficiency scores go up. Many students realize this when they get to college and discover they are not as proficient as they were led to believe. In summary, many of the biggest Unrealized Assumptions involve assuming that reality must always match some important sounding words that someone came up with. The numbers don't lie. It's the words used to describe them, that can lie. (~2015)

Reminding, Pride, Fragility

Pride sneaks into our hearts and heads without us being aware of it, and so requires a frequent reminding of how fragile situations really are, in order to fend it off.

Feeling the Love

We are already swimming in God's love. But we don't always feel it inside our hearts. It is as though the selfish part of the heart stores up some of God's glory for itself, which accumulates like stone layers in the heart. We must allow the excavator to come in and scoop up that stone, and send it to God, who uses that glory differently than we can. Then, the warm feeling of God's love rushes in and fills that void in our hearts. (9/10/20)

Tough love

You might say to your young adult children, "By causing you to pay your own bills, I am saying I believe in your ability to improve your decisions over time."

Diversion

The only reason entertainers have jobs is because other people have already built the basic necessary infrastructure of society, which has nothing to do with entertainment. When the masses are starving, entertainment is the last thing on their minds. And I say this as person who has worked as a musician.

Mob Mentality

I think zombie movies are popular because people have an innate primitive fear in the backs of their minds, of mob mentality turning against them. But what's disturbing is the increasing popularity of these shows, perhaps portending something many of us know, only in the backs of our minds, the giant mob mentality we suspect is coming. (2018)

Which Kind of Satisfaction?

Anger is usually a negative passion that can be redirected into positive passions to the same degree. Positive passions include altruism, service, and many others. These can bring a longer lasting, deeper, and constructive satisfaction to the soul, where anger usually brings a short term, selfish, destructive satisfaction. Re-channel anger passion into a passion for the virtues. (Substack 11/11/23)

Love, Trust, Forgiveness, Assumption

While Love and Trust and Forgiveness may overlap, they are different things.

Self-monitoring
When the human brain, or any other system for that matter, is responsible for monitoring itself, then a malfunction may render it unaware of a malfunction. (substack 1/30/23)

Consideration
When first handed what seems to be a raw deal, don't knee-jerk reject it. Take some time to analyze the details. There could be a hidden advantage in it somewhere. If not, then do what you can to reject it.

Arrgh
Though ye may be visually oriented, let not yerself get caught up in the scenery, lest ye be distracted from yer mission.

Mindset Components
The human mind has many tendencies, affecting our many choices. One choice is to be self-focused or other-focused. Another is to be positive-focused or negative-focused. The interplay of only these four, leads to situations where a person could be self-positive or self-negative, while at the same time being other-positive or other-negative. "Praise the Lord" is an exclamation of being positive to the supreme other. This is one mindset that should be encouraged above the other choices. And, if you surrender the self to the Lord, then being self-positive is a good thing.

Priorities
Figuratively speaking, some people pay too much attention to what or who's next to them and not enough attention to what or who's right in front of them.

Forgive vs. Submit
Throughout the various relationships you will have, remember that forgiving people helps you. But remember just as strongly, that to forgive them does not mean to submit to them. Forgiveness does not always involve submission.

Order vs. Disorder
People don't want to live in a trashed up, run-down neighborhood, not just because it looks bad, but because they know, deep in their hearts, in the backs of their minds, that people who more often make poor decisions also live there, and that more of these people are more likely to be dangerous. Innocent, well-meaning people may also live there, and they are often the victims of the dangerous ones. The numbers show all this to be true, although the reason for it is hotly debated.

Earned vs. Unearned
Experts and other speakers need to cite the real psychological study evidence that people are happier when Earning money, as opposed to simply being Given money. Just saying it without evidence, does not appeal to everyone and will not win any arguments.

Intelligence, Knowledge
Once when I was about 13, my Dad, who I agreed with the vast majority of the time, said "I've thought about everything there is to think about". Even though I disagreed with him on that at the time, I remember then thinking around age 20 that I had accomplished this "all-knowing" status myself, when it came to philosophical matters.

But since then, I've discovered there's always something new to think about, and I do mean profoundly important things. I came to realize the profoundness of the old saying "The more you know, the more you know you don't know".

And, there are very different types of intelligence. And the older I get the more clearly I can see these different types, in different people. There's all different types of smarts. It appears everyone has differing amounts of the different types.

Complacency

If your tendency is to fight against something, then fight against evil. But during the times where evil seems vanquished for the most part, do not subconsciously create a problem just to have something to fight against. And watch that you don't slip into calling something evil, when it may be just a difference of opinion. Instead, fight against complacency, the real evil that insidiously creeps in when it seems there is none. Yes, when good triumphs, thank God passionately. But also have an equal passion for fighting complacency during times of relatively low adversity.

It is important to recognize what times of relatively low adversity look like. I would define them where the vast majority of poor people are not underweight and they have a secure and comfortable place to stay. I would venture to say in early 2021, the U.S. fits this vast majority definition, although government could change it quickly. (~ February 2021)

Dreams

Sometimes you're glad it was only a dream, sometimes you're sad it was only a dream.

Depth of Realization

When my children were about 6 and 8 years old, I would occasionally say to them, "When you think you know something, then something else happens, and then you *really* know it, that's called 'Depth of Realization'." I'm not sure they understood it at that age. I probably should have waited until they were about 12. But that's a small window of opportunity because also when they were about 6 and 8, I told them that when they became 13, they will think everything I say and do is wrong. (At least I was right about that.)

Anyway, they turned out to be fairly smart and understanding teenagers, although there were some conflicts as to be expected based on thousands of years of human history. In hindsight though, emphasizing abstract thought may have affected them in a positive way, even at 6 or 8 years of age. I think parents underestimate the need to talk about abstract concepts with their kids at earlier ages. (See also in this document "Level of Realization")

Flexibility

One of the sad but necessary things about life is when a young innocent child has to learn he has done something wrong unintentionally, such as playing too rough with his little brother. Fortunately, most children are flexible enough to shake off the sadness of this and learn and move forward. People who lose this flexibility are some sad adults. We should retain some aspects of child-like thought, but definitely not all of them.

Antidote Quotes

I like to read profound quotes because they are often antidotes to assumptions.

Forethought, Economy

When people find it hard to get money, their decision-making will change, even though they thought they had prepared well enough beforehand.

Time Management

Total Team Minutes - an economic concept where people on the same team share duties and innovations in such a way that there is less reinventing the wheel, so the whole team moves forward.

I'm not talking socialism here. We still need separate teams competing so that the sting of laziness keeps us efficient.

But within the same team, out of laziness, a leader might refuse to spend 2 minutes to make an adjustment to a program that *would have* saved 7 people 1 minute apiece (7 minus 2 = 5 minutes *would have* saved for the total team).

Then the leader wonders why his team lags behind, telling them "It only takes a minute for each one of you to do this." He might later feel the sting of his own laziness as employee turnover increases.

I don't think you can come up with a system that actually measures "Total Team Minutes", but once you put

a name or a label on a concept, people find it easier to think about it and be aware of it.

Magical Thinking
Winston Churchill once said “An appeaser is one who feeds a crocodile - hoping it will eat him last.” But it’s become even worse now. Today, an appeaser is someone who will feed the crocodile, thinking now the crocodile will be his friend.

Prayer
There were 4 starving people, one each on 4 islands. 2 of them prayed to God, asking Him for a coconut. The other two did not pray for coconuts.
One person who prayed, found a coconut, and his relationship with God deepened. He still had to work through times when he did not get what he prayed for. But he was on a spiritual path.
One person who did not pray, found one also. His joy lasted as long as the coconut.
The other person who prayed for a coconut was instead given a spiritual peace from God, because he had surrendered to a higher power.
The other person who did not pray for a coconut, received none of the above.
Then there was a 5th person starving on a 5th island. He had received a message in a bottle from each of the four others, who described what happened to them. And he prayed for a coconut.

Conscious & Sub-conscious
“Flashlight and engine room” concept: It seems like the conscious is the watcher of our brain but he has only a flashlight in the night, as he moves about the ship.

Beneficial Instant Gratification
Is it a happy thing to submit to the Lord? The instant gratification comes in the form of a sudden deep satisfaction of knowing you are doing right and that it will turn out better in the long run.

Deserved
Am I down on myself too much or am I really that bad and deserve to be down on myself? Possibly both. I deserve it and the next step in this perpetual two-step movement is to feel God’s forgiveness, so you don’t get down on yourself. His forgiveness saves you from your deserved fate, making it no longer deserved.

Self Definition
You cannot define yourself by other people’s mistakes, including their misperceptions, over-sensitivities, and overactive imaginations. (might put this on substack)

Server and Observer
To my children: You have a greater ability to adapt and improve than you think. More often, you should take a step back and ask: “Wait. What’s supposed to be the priority here? The better we take care of ourselves, the better we can take care of others.”

Debt to God
When you feel God’s forgiveness, do you feel automatically that you owe Him something, like a debt or gratitude or service? Yes, but the Bible says we owe nothing because our debt has been paid. So is it wrong to feel that we owe God? I think we should redefine this feeling. It is not a debt we feel, but a desire to do good. And it is ok to feel a desire to do good.

Focus: Self or Other
What I need to work on is humility during the good times. One way to do this is to say “Praise the Lord” which shifts the focus back from the self to the other, the Supreme Other.
I had an elderly patient who was previously a pastor. He would often say “Praise the Lord!” with great enthusiasm, although he had advanced dementia and couldn’t say much else. He was a great inspiration.

So it seems in good times and bad, the software of the mind includes a very underestimated layer, that of choosing to focus on self or other. But whether self or other, focus with service and gratitude, not blame or hate. When focusing on helping others, the actions of the self tend to become automatic, and the accurate feeling of being controlled by God, is revealed.

The Observer

You can't totally "Let go to God" while observing yourself doing so. You have to let go of the internal self-observer as well. This may be why Peter fell in the water.

Healthy doubt

I feel like I learned early on that what a person thinks is real, might not be what it appears. In other words, I naturally have a little doubt about what appears in front of me, until some more evidence comes available. That's why I think I'm not hypnotizable, nor susceptible to suggestion, nor highly assumptive, nor prone to quickly jump on various bandwagons.

Because of this, I sometimes get looks from most people who want to go ahead and assume it is what it immediately appears to be. This is why I like visual and logical illusions that prove how easily people are deceived. They make my case that it's wise not to assume too much.

Two of my favorite logical illusions are "The Monty Hall Problem" and "The Birthday Problem" (easy to find on search).

Flexibility

You may have felt suffocated by surrounding circumstances, and your mind began a frantic effort to think outside the box. Then just when you thought things could not get any worse, your decision-making changed in ways you never thought it would, and you found that you survived.

Of course, like anything a human does, thinking outside the box can be overdone. But mixed with the right amount of adherence to virtuous principle, it is admirable.

Deception vs Truth

Do not mistake Deception for Truth. We tend to do this when a Deception:
is more widespread,
is emotionally appealing,
has words with a ring to them,
has a short term benefit at a long term expense.

Degrees of Depression

There is bad depression, and there is bad depression with knowing you will eventually get through it.

A Matter of Degree

One of the many fallacies we tend to believe is that there are only 2 answers for everything: yes or no, all or none, black or white, etc., when often there is really a 3rd or 4th possibility. Even when there are only two main possible alternatives, it could sometimes be possible that one, the other, both, or neither is the correct answer.

One example is that in life, there are the helpers and the helpless. But there are also the destroyers and the builders. With only these 4 variables, there may be whole sets of arrays, ranges, or spectrums of answers or possibilities, like points along numerous scales, depending on the degree of help given or received, and how this interacts with the degree of destruction or building that takes place.

When I was about 19, I recall thinking that "Things are not all one way or another, but often somewhere in between". I mentioned this to a friend but he vehemently disagreed. Then somewhere around age 58, I became so fond of the underrated word "sometimes" that I got my wife to embroider a diagram on a shirt that said "Not Always", with a Venn diagram below it. This was kind of my statement that things are not always as simple as most people would like us to believe.

If people would stop using so many absolutes in conversations, such as "always" and "never" and "every time", I think there would be less arguments, or at least they would be less heated.

Anyway, when someone insists you give a yes or no answer, you might reply:
"Some truths cannot be simply yes or no."
"Yes or no would be a lie either way."
"I swore to tell the whole truth and yes or no would belie the whole truth."
"Sometimes the whole truth cannot be boxed into yes or no."
"Just because you think the answer should be a simple yes or no, doesn't mean it is. After all, you are the one seeking information from me, so how would you know if my honest answer is that simple?"
"A yes or no answer would not allow me to tell the whole truth as you have had me swear to do."
"No is the quick and blurry answer, which requires additional information to even come close to the whole truth."
"I do not recall with 100% accuracy but probably yes."
"Based on my understanding of our discourse, a yes or no answer would belie the whole truth which I swore to tell."

The questioner who says "Answer me yes or no" is either (a) assuming through prejudice that the whole truth can be captured as yes or no, or (b) is purposefully trying to make the answerer look bad. In (a), assumptions have their own matters of degree, like most everything else, ranging from mild to extreme. (~2018)

Fantasy
In a person's mind, there are at least two worlds - a real world and a fantasy world. Sometimes there are things in one, that you don't want in the other. For example, in the real world I would make effort to study for a test, but not in the fantasy world. Likewise, my mind might suddenly create a video of me speaking angrily to someone I was mad at, where I would be mortified if I did it in the real world.

Visual Perception
It occurred to me as I looked out the window at the clouds almost at sunset, I am not seeing the world as it is. Instead I'm seeing my brain's interpretation of the world. I've known this since taking a psych class called "Perception" in college in the 1980's, but sometimes realizations go to a new level.

Effort
It's not in the resting, but the running.

Immature
Those who react immaturely to the truth are more likely to be lied to the next time, unless they are still children in which case there still may be some hope. (Substack 10/10/23)

Expectations
One of the simplest yet most profound life lessons that keeps occurring in my mind with increasing depth and frequency as the decades go by, is this: The world ain't what it's cracked up to be. However, it makes me even more thankful that there's a Heaven.

Self-Assessment
Most people think most people think like they do. And, they think the ones who don't, should. A functioning population requires variation in thought among individuals. But where to draw the line? Well it gets drawn daily based on compromises that are reached, friendly or not.

Self-Assessment
I can tell how other people are acting better than I can tell how I am acting. I recall thinking this at around age 18. This probably would have been the first entry into this work, if I'd had it going at the time.

Desperation vs. Security
When I was a young man, I recall feeling from time to time that I had a big, trusting heart and so many

around me did not have trustworthy hearts, especially women, whose hearts seemed to change with the wind (although now, I see that many women feel the same way about men). But there were some tough times then.

Around age 25 my girlfriend had broken up with me and one Friday night I had a choice of staying home by myself, or going out to socialize. It felt like I had flipped a coin and it said heads, go out and socialize. So I went out and talked with a few people.

Nothing really exciting happened. The main thing I learned that night was to offer myself as a polite and respectful person, in conversation with various people, but more importantly not to expect anything in return, just to give. Strangely, the more I gave, the more I was filled with the ability to give.

This "not expecting anything in return" is something I think men must recognize that most of us already have in us. It is the stuff of bravery and altruism, but it lays dormant in many of us. One side effect of it though is that women are attracted to it. The other side of the coin is that they are not attracted to an emotionally desperate man.

After some thought, I realized that I had been desperate not to be hurt again. But to get out of that cycle, I had to lay hold of the bravery that was in there, and apply it as a tool to my situation, and go out and give, not expecting anything in return.

Oddly, there was a gratification from this, which kept me going in that direction. So then my dutiful task became to respectfully offer a clean conversation and situation to those I interacted with. There were still some occasional poor decisions - usually they involved alcohol - but overall the road was fairly clear. The lyrics to "Hold On Loosely" took on a deeper, even philosophical meaning. My heart was no longer desperate; I knew that I would be ok.

(I originally spoke about this episode with Graham & then also wrote this to Daniel, but I wanted to include it in this document also.)

Caution

Often, being more careful involves saying no. Also, as I have mentioned to my family and to myself many times: "Be more careful than you think you need to be."

Character

Regardless of how principled that people seem on a daily basis, there are some who will jump ship and abandon their principles when crunch time gets here. And they will do so at different levels of crunch.

Just as unfortunate, many of us fancy ourselves as most excellent judges of character who are able to easily recognize just who these potential ship jumpers might be. However, my experience has shown the exact opposite to be the case.

Flexibility

When you are older and let go and let yourself feel really good, you have to watch out that you maintain the rubber band flexibility to snap back to attention so that your guard is not let down. I learned a long time ago that people are generally more forgiving of your mistakes when you are very young and it could be said that you didn't know any better. Interestingly, the flexibility of the mind tends to disappear with aging (as does the flexibility of the muscles and joints). It is once again a testament to the fact that the brain is a bodily organ too, though we tend to forget this. So flexibility must be practiced often, like aerobic exercise.

Disappointment

In the face of disappointment, remember that every single day the wise person learns something new about how to keep moving forward. I think one of the Proverbs in the Bible also says something like this. Many of the Proverbs are recurring truths that also occur to some people through daily experience.

Fear

It is trendy to say "Embrace your fears", but I would prefer to face my fears. I think embracing them is going a bit overboard. If the prospect of being left alone with your fears is scary, this is an indicator that you need to leave your electronic device and face your fears. For otherwise you will be blindfolded and guided by them, until you unexpectedly have to deal with them.

Overconfidence
To the degree you think you are lucky, you are not.

Self-Questioning
The brain mechanism of second-guessing the self, that causes us to presume people innocent until proven guilty, has malfunctioned in many, taking a good thing too far and turning it into a bad thing. Second-guessing the self is a tool that can be over-used, under-used, misused, or properly used.

Motivation, Expectation
You can aim to achieve perfection knowing you may improve along the way, but also knowing you will never achieve it. Or you can try to achieve perfection and be bitterly and perpetually disappointed and self-critical because you didn't achieve it.

Most Media
Most media in the U.S. today tends to show one demographic treating another demographic unfairly most of the time. But when I go out in the real world and talk with people of all demographics, I find that people just want to get along for the most part. So, instead of seeing media as a reflection of what's going on, we should instead see it as a warped exaggeration of what's going on, unless the stats show otherwise. Having said that, we should still bear in mind that while numbers don't lie, how we talk about the numbers, can very well lie. (3/13/21)

When
We all consider the who, what, where, when, why, and how on most any decision we make. But when we are young, the "when" is often underprioritized. Time is a more scarce and fragile resource than the young realize. (April 2021)

Shall Be
It is what it is, but then it shall be what you make of it. This is within the sense of free will the Lord has given you. (5/26/21)

Blamers
Some people tend to blame others first. Other people tend to blame themselves first. But it's more like a spectrum with extreme self-blamers on one end, and extreme other-blamers on the other. Between those two, there are all degrees of self and other blamers, like an array of points along a line.

Interestingly, with this spectrum, birds of a feather flock together. The like-minded people tend to hang around each other. This magnetism is no small thing. I have observed that whole geographical areas tend to contain a lot more of one or the other.

Some whole groups tend to blame their own group first, while other whole groups tend to blame other whole groups first. Further, when these two types of groups come in contact with one another, it's a perfect maladaptive storm. The Other Blamers blame the other group, and the Self Blamers gladly accept this blame. It's like an unholy alliance between an emotional sadist and an emotional masochist.

And human nature tends to make us do the "More is Better" dance until eventually, the Self Blamers are so downtrodden by the Other Blamers that one by one, the Self Blamers begin awakening as they each reach their Enough-is-Enough point. Some may never reach this point, but times must get pretty tough before most of them do.

The moral to this story is to make effort to avoid these two extremes. Step back and be objective enough to look at both views. But remember, if you linger too long on the Self Blamer side, you could be stepping right into the quicksand.

The Fragility of Symbols
The increasing reliance on symbols, such as words and cryptocurrency, is not the problem. The problem is the unrealized fragility of the item relied upon. (9/9/21)

Incentive
Because economics is based on psychology, I have observed the following:
Action with Incentive = Innovation
and
Action without Incentive = Stagnation.
Historical proof abounds. (10/3/21)

Stepping Stone
When the Lord gives you an advantage in this world, don't step up on it and use it as a gloating point to stand still upon, while looking around and down on everyone else, as selfishness may tempt you to do. Instead, be thankful for it as a stepping stone, as you use it to help pull others up with you. (11/2/21)

Dig Down
Denial is a very effective way of getting deeper into a problem by ignoring the problem. (12/19/21)

The Time Not to Measure
Even though part of our mission here is to do good things and help people, we should avoid the temptation to measure ourselves by these actions, because measuring is *not always* a good thing to do, and *not always* helpful. (1/9/22)

The Yearn to Return
Sometimes, the "yearn to return" is a problem. When we might see an old neighborhood & our heart wants to go back in time, but it can't. Also, regret is sometimes a problem, like "I should have kept that old house." In both cases, our imagination has gotten off the track; the track of humility & maturity. Getting off this track is due to a child-like thought pattern where the heart goes for the easy so-called solution - it goes for the candy. The head must guide the heart to run on a healthier fuel – the satisfaction that comes from being thankful to the Lord. (1/9/22) (significant edit **1/26/26**)

One Choice
For some but not all things, you might as well love it because you're in the middle of it. (2/10/22)

Not a Natural
If you don't have a natural ability for something, but instead you have to work extra hard to achieve it, you probably have a greater sense of accomplishment for having achieved it. And also, you might be more well versed in the details that are required to achieve it. (2/12/22)

Romanticized
Sometimes, what we *think* we like is really a romanticized notion of some cold hard reality. For example, some people romanticize about living as a pioneer out west in the early 1800's. (2/13/22)

One Strategy
One thing that exercise or other physical exertion might teach us is to shift the mental spotlight of focus onto the physical completion of the task, and away from much of the discomfort we may feel. This is also a similar mindset to shifting priority onto physical reality, and away from words and feelings.

The talent of making these shifts when needed, can be increased with practice, and is part of a healthy strategy for dealing with things in the physical world, since by the way, this is one of the worlds we do live in. (3/6/22)

Teenagers
As a teenager, I was naïve about how naïve I was. (4/9/22)

Box
The box is the accepted societal norms. Thinking outside the box is ok to a point. (4/10/22)

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It's Good To See You Arguing

There are no perfect systems designed by human beings. Some systems are so flawed that they must be torn down instead of attempting any improvement. Other flawed systems have a history of making many good internal improvements along the way, and so are worth keeping.

Take any system or subsystem you can think of: economic, education, manufacturing, government, and many more. For each one, there are advocates who wish to either (a) tear it down and start again, or (b) build on it.

The difference could mean an entire population moves ahead, or is set back for many years.

People are persuaded by what they hear from the "tear down" or "build on" advocates, who often overplay or underplay a system's successes and failures. This is the art of Disproportion.

The use of Disproportion as a tool for convincing people, is more critical than ever with today's near-instantaneous mass communication.

How do you tell if what you are hearing is Disproportion or not?

Situation 1: Free Exchange of Information

If what you hear is an open discussion where people are disagreeing, this is a sign they can say anything they wish. In this case, generally the more numbers that you hear being discussed, the more truth is revealed.

Numbers don't lie but people can lie about what the numbers mean. However, the trend holds that, when more and more numbers are openly discussed and compared, the lying gets increasingly backed into a corner where it is easy to unmask. (Tip: Where free exchange of information is allowed, compare arguments where fewer numbers are given, versus arguments where many numbers are given.)

Situation 2: Limited Exchange of Information

In North Korea, not only could you get thrown in jail for discussing certain numbers that unveil the government's deception, but the numbers you are even able to *access* inside the country may be false, due to the limit on free exchange of information. (Here are a couple of numbers: Freedomhouse.org rates North Korea a 3 out of 100 for basic freedom, and by contrast they rate South Korea at 83/100.)

In situation 2, this limited exchange, where no one is allowed to disagree, in and of itself, should be the red flag that you are being deceived. The information you even *have* access to, is highly likely Disproportionate.

Bottom line: Free exchange of information is the key. Most places in the world are a mix between situations 1 and 2, with many now heading in the direction of situation 2. Of course we don't like to see people arguing, and if the emotion were tuned down a bit, disagreements might go a bit smoother. But it still beats the alternative. (4/23/22) (Substack 1/14/24)

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Predicting without Patting

There is predicting the future, and there is predicting the future with a little patting yourself on the back. This is one more example of taking a good thing too far & turning it into a bad thing. (5/2/22)

Which Legacy Will You Choose?
I was looking at a fossil of Cleoniceras besairei that has most of the shiny rainbow colored shell still on it. Should we envy the relatively mindless creature that created something beautiful, a legacy that lasted 100 million years in this world? Who of us will be able to do that? Or should we use it to remind us that what is most important is the spiritual? (5/21/22) (Substack 1/7/23)

Control
"Things beyond our control" also includes things we could have controlled but had no idea at the time how to control. (6/22/22)

Gadsby's Tavern
When I took my family to visit Washington DC in 2011, we ate supper one evening at Gadsby's Tavern in Alexandria. After we finished, my family had gone out the front door and I was a few seconds behind them. As I approached the door to leave, I looked off to the left and saw a room that was dimly lit by a chandelier in such a way that I could almost imagine the visual echoes of the people that once gathered there in the seventeen hundreds - laughing, drinking, enjoying one another's company in such a way that, we in the midst of our high-tech distractions today, may never come to know. It gave me a bit of a chill. (Substack 4/19/23)

The Money
It's sad when people choose to dwell on the things they don't have. The word "covet" comes to mind. Being human, I admit that having a lot of excess money would be fun. However, wishing for it year after year is a sad, self-destructive behavior and can be avoided by simply not wishing for it. I learned this long ago but because human nature causes these lessons to slip out of mind, an occasional self-reminding is well worth the effort. (8/6/22)

That Crutch
Maybe it's not so great having a screen at your fingertips all the time where you are tempted to simply absorb information, without much time spent considering, comparing, imagining, innovating, wondering – and here's the key – doing this just on your own, without that crutch. (9/5/22)

The Parking Indicator
It is widely known that, not only is it easier to pull forward out of a parking space than to have to back out, but also that kids and lately even so-called adults walk suddenly behind cars that are starting to back out. So, I think one way to spot the personality types who are easily hypnotized by usualities (thinking inside the box) is when you watch them parking a vehicle. They don't pull forward into the next empty space when possible, and some don't even do this when leaving. (11/17/22)

Slip & Fall
The reason "It is what it is" has become a popular saying is because today in our society, complacency slips into fantasy so often that "It is what it is" is what people think during those few light bulb moments when reality hits. Fall into fantasy, get jolted back into reality. (11/20/22)

Edit
If we as humans were not ever allowed to edit ourselves, we would remain on the wrong path from infancy on. (12/21/22)

Matter of Degree
To the degree that something is wrongfully tempting, not doing it provides the same degree of relief, and thankfulness to God. (1/7/23)

Where's Your Head?
The people who will be shocked by a devastating economic downturn, are the same people who today ignore the tiny cracks forming, and who choose to carelessly repeat, "Oh that won't ever happen. You're overthinking it." (4/19/23)

The Forest As Well As The Trees
We should not always emphasize seeing the forest over the trees, or vice versa. Instead, emphasize different proportions of these as appropriate to the situation. (4/21/23)

Zoom
It's not always easy to see until you zoom out a bit. (5/10/23)

Setting Schmetting
The really important things that people say to one another, are not very different whether they are said in an impressive or unimpressive setting. (7/23/23)

The Pits
There's always a market for inspirational talk, to help pull people out of the emotional pit they're languishing in. However, any new inspiration must be tempered in our minds with the reality that we will have to do some hard work through hardships. Otherwise, we are doomed to riding the emotional roller-coaster the rest of our lives, including the occasional trip back to the emotional pit. Instead, we must open ourselves to run on the fuel of virtuous and principled effort, where just the effort by itself is one of the rewards. (7/21/23) (Substack 10/9/23)

Subway
Decades ago after my Dad passed, I found myself looking for self-help advice. I purchased the audio series of Stephen Covey's "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People". In one segment, Covey gives the example of riding on the subway when a father and two young boys got on. The boys were rambunctious, bumping into people and messing up their newspapers. The father didn't do anything to stop them. Eventually someone tells the father, "You need to control your kids!" and the father replied "I probably should, but we just came from the hospital where their mother just died, and I think we just don't know how to handle it."

This is a prime example of perspective shift. The subway rider had made the assumption that this was simply a bad father. Instead of assuming you know, assume *first* that you don't know, and ask "What's happening here?" Then take it from there. (8/3/23)

Victim
Do not be a victim of the victim mentality. (8/13/23) (Substack 11/27/23)

Legacy
I suppose my Dad wanted to give me the legacy gift of going into an established law practice. But it wasn't for me. In the same way, I sought to give my sons the gift of my written-down thoughts on psychology and spirituality. I see now that mostly it wasn't for them. But my Dad gave me love, and I give my Sons love. And that by far, is the much more important legacy. (9/2/23)

The Train
Having moved into a house where a train runs close by, I began thinking how the neighbors might interpret the sound, and how I interpret it. When the train engine runs by, it can be compared to the sound of a jet flying over. Not like living right next to an airport, but maybe like a few miles from one. Fortunately the horns don't blow until the train is well away, so that's a distant sound.

Before we bought the house, I asked a lady who lives in the neighborhood if the train sound was bothersome.

She replied that on the contrary, it's a soothing sound and it doesn't wake her up at night.

So far it hasn't awakened me at night either. It might be because it comes gradually and then fades away, like the wind, a rain on the roof, or the ebb and flow of a wave on the seashore.

But also I was struck by the analogy that it's like the Lord. He's big, powerful, and He's going to show you things based on His schedule. He might be soothing or irritating to you, depending on whether you accept what He has planned. So when I hear the train now, I think of that analogy. It reminds me to accept what He has planned, which includes bringing me what I need. And I might as well learn to love it because He will always be there, and His plan will always come to fruition. And that to me is soothing as well. (10/8/23)

Much More

In the things of this world, Hope is more Humble than Expectation. (10/8/23) (Substack 11/27/23)

Telescopic Attitude

I like looking at pictures from the Hubble and Webb telescopes because they put my troubles into perspective. (11/26/23) (Substack 11/26/23)

My Body, My Time Machine

Has society changed that much in the past 40 years? Having been both 26 also 66, I can say oh yeah. I recall that at 26 (during most of 1984), my view of the previous 40 years was that society had made a lot of positive changes. There were still problems among various groups, but fast forward to today and the U.S. is much more angrily divided among these groups than in 1984.

Fortunately, most people in ordinary conversations today are still polite and seem to want to get along with one another, but that percentage is dwindling.

The decades-long trend I have noticed is that the inter-group problems we heard about on media were always much more widespread than what I experienced in my everyday talks with other human beings. Through the years, this disproportionate media coverage continued. Eventually and unfortunately, peoples' attitudes started to mirror what they saw in media. It's like, through the years, someone has been dragging a lot of average people into the mud and setting us all up for a wrestling match.

Why has it gotten worse? Could it be that someone doesn't want everybody to get along? Are these "someones" routing large sums of money to various influential places? What would they have to gain by all the ensuing chaos?

That last question especially, is what we have to ask ourselves. Because in the midst of this chaos, when the population in general finally cries out for help, who will it look to? Sadly, I don't think the answer to this would quite be the same as it would have been, back in 1984. (12/31/23)

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Me-Maw and Pappaw

I dare say that if most of our great-great-grandparents were still alive and in good shape, there would not be so much selfishness abounding in our culture today.

Norms have changed and just in my 66 years, I have watched as it has become increasingly normal like never before, to lie, deceive, provide poor products and services, be passive aggressive, blame others, and routinely refuse to provide common courtesies such as returning messages or saying thank you. "Quiet quitting" is more popular than social media and many people increasingly make up answers when they really don't know the answer, just to impress you with their so-called knowledge or get you off the phone.

Computer programs are written by the people swimming in this situation, so the Moral Decay Pandemic is sweeping through software across the land, including where recently Google's "Gemini" A.I. refused to say plainly that pedophilia is wrong (1). Yes, artificial intelligence appears to be…artificial.

Our great-great-grandparents would not have tolerated this. Today we just scroll down.

Of course, widespread moral decay is not new in human history. Populations over thousands of years have fallen into it (2). While the average person might agree with this, he probably is also unwittingly a part of it. This is my main point here. He will complain about it while acting out in ways that promote it, blissfully unaware. And when enough people develop this mindset, the social-scape becomes a morass that consumes morality.

Why would we unwittingly promote our own destruction?

Human nature includes some good and bad tendencies. One of the bad ones is rationalization, which among other things causes a tendency to slip away from the lessons of the past, especially through each generation, during extended times of low adversity.

Are we in the middle of "times of low adversity" in the U.S.? Consider Maslow's Hierarchy, where our physical needs - air, fluid, food, warmth, and shelter - are the first needs that must be met, and the most essential for survival (3).

In a place where most poor people have cell phones and shelter, and an unprecedented high percentage of the poor are not underweight, "survival-adversity" is therefore low for most of the population. (Except for any self-created adversity from antisocial behavior.) So yes, most people in the U.S. today have their survival needs met much easier than people in other times and places, although we don't like to think about that. We rationalize that thought away.

Another part of rationalization is the redefining of words, as well as the prioritizing of words ahead of physical reality. For example, we are raising the bar on "rudeness". This "Oh leave it alone, don't rock the boat, he'll straighten up eventually" is part of it. We call ourselves "tolerant" but when parents tolerate a child's bad behavior, they get more of it.

Rampant rationalization is the culprit when the lessons of history are disregarded, not just forgotten. After decades of relatively low survival-adversity here, most people feel that if all else fails, they can at least meet Maslow's basic needs easily, without much forethought, planning, or effort. When these survival needs have been so easily met for so long, they start to be taken for granted, especially where they are simply granted, and not earned.

Many of us appear only dimly aware of how our new definition of "normal" has redefined manners, politeness, work ethic, honesty, helpfulness, rationalization, striving, purpose, meaning, long term thought, and thousands of other human characteristics. To them, there's been no significant redefining. It's just normal. Some complain about it and still go along with it for fear of upsetting the proverbial apple cart. But this non-action places our culture on the wrong side of the proverbial fan.

What action can a person take when the norms have changed so much that our great-great grandparents would be considered the rudest people on the planet for the simple disciplinary advice they might give?

Go ahead and be like those great-great grandparents. Be like that grouchy, grumpy, crotchety old codger we used to say was "off his rocker." (Nowadays they might say "His device hasn't been getting the updates".)

It might not seem like it, but our culture really does want some tough love. Hold the grumpy line, but in an endearing way. Many will not agree with you at first, but subconsciously, they will pick up that you care. That's a fine line to talk, but worth the effort.

Tarnation! Don't make me have to take ya out behind the woodshed!

1. https://torontosun.com/news/weird/google-gemini-under-fire-for-refusing-to-condemn-pedophilia
2. Zimmerman, Carle: "Family and Civilization" (1947, reprinted 2008).
3. https://www.thoughtco.com/maslows-hierarchy-of-needs-4582571

(3/2/24) (Substack 3/2/24)

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A Belated Realization
When my Mom's Dad was in the hospital (I think it may have been a VA hospital), days before his death back in the 1980's, the other patient in the room was a guy who kept talking to us at intervals. He was talking about things that happened in the room, and interactions that occurred between my Grand Dad and the staff. The striking part is that this patient put things in such a way that there was humor in it. And thinking back, it appears more and more that he was making an effort to help us feel better. I wish I had realized this at the time. I would have thanked him. (3-5-24)

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The Money Pandemic

Some things will not change for generations, because people suffer from a condition known as Human Nature. One of these unchanging things is the fact that some don't like it when a person near them comes up with a good idea. Another is that most people intrinsically don't have a firm grasp on the concept of accumulation. So, if your good idea is to explain to someone why all their small purchases are adding up to an insurmountable *debt*, you will likely need to duck, because a double dose of a third thing based on human nature might be flung rapidly in your direction.

I used to say, "Do not despair. If you acquitted yourself respectably, the person will likely one day see the wisdom." However, I have seen recently that if there's one sure historical indicator of a full-on wisdom-blindness pandemic, it's record *debt*.

Everyone bemoans the unprecedented consumer debt and government debt. The disagreement is where to cut them. But there is a tool that can be used to make such decisions. It rests in this phrase: People are Creatures of Incentive.

If you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. If you teach a man how to fish, one of you is going to be headed to the store for a six pack before too long. I mean, you know what I mean.

Milton Friedman may have said it best. There are 4 ways to spend money, paraphrased here:

1) You can spend your own money on yourself.
Your incentive is to be very careful how much you spend and, you make sure you get the best bang for the buck.
2) You can spend your own money on someone else.
Your incentive is to be careful on not spending too much. But you don't worry as much about the value per dollar.
3) You can spend somebody else's money on yourself.
You're careful to get the things you like. But you're not necessarily worried about getting the best bang for your buck. You're happier to spend more of somebody else's money, depending on how closely you are being watched.
4) You can spend somebody else's money on somebody else.
You become a "distributor of funds." You're interested in making your own life as good as you can, which for

some in this situation is an opportunity for corruption. And you're not going to be anywhere near as careful about the amount or the value, when spending others' money on others. But this too depends on how closely you are being watched, so you will say all you can about what a good steward you are.

In a household, you are usually in situation 1 or 2. But if you see your credit cards as simply "someone else's money", you gravitate to situations 3 and 4, which spells financial doom and the repo man will soon be helping you back into reality.

A government however, is perpetually in situation 4. Enough said.

https://www.actioneconomics.com.au/2016/11/18/milton-friedman-on-four-ways-to-spend-money/

(4/12/24) (Substack 4/13/24)

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Gaming the System

I've long been disappointed with the way society seems to increasingly value speed over accuracy. But I recently had a conversation with a health care worker that reminded me how even accuracy can be taken too far.

For whatever reason, a payment system was set up that encouraged doctors to order more tests than they might have otherwise. The health care worker said she worked for a doctor who quit a clinic because the number of unnecessary tests was bogging down the system and using up money that could have been available for other services that were actually needed. This in turn was limiting the treatment choices that doctors could make for their patients.

Human nature is such that people are creatures of incentive, so there will always be those who innovate ways to game a system, and anything a human does can be underdone, overdone, or done just about right. However, I think overdoing the testing might be the lesser of two problems. I think most patients might agree that they would rather have too many tests done than not enough, unless it gets to the point of ridiculousness, which might have been what the doctor perceived before she quit. At least with too much testing, a patient will have it in his medical record that many things were definitively ruled out. Hopefully someone is working on a third alternative that is more palatable to everyone. (5-16-24)

Translate

Focus on "translate" words into action. We know green means go but we don't just sit there at the light. We move our foot on the accelerator. Of course this is an obvious example, but too often there are other situations where we say we know what something means, yet don't act on it. For example, we pray "Thank you God" but then a split second later we're thinking about something we need to buy at the store. Instead, the desired action here is to dwell on the thankfulness until the heart really feels the joy of it. This may take a few minutes and you may get to the store a little later, but your mind will be in much better shape when you do. (4/21/24)

Two meanings of "the past has passed":

1. Ignore the past
2. Use it as a guide for what to do next time

(7-5-24)

Imagine

If you feel your mind being drawn into the micromanagement of the day, repeat "thankful, helpful." And if you're not feeling thankful, think about what you love or like, and imagine what it would be like without it.
9-4-24

I Want That

We could probably replace the yawn-inducing term "economic productivity" with the more interesting phrase "Desired Goods or Services." So how do goods or services come to be desired?

1. Discovery: A good or service is discovered by someone. The person might have discovered it by happenstance (like Jed Clampett discovering oil while shootin' at some food), or by his/her own innovation.
2. Desire: Other people want it, and are willing to pay for it.

This is productivity because people are willing to pay for it. And when they do, it's a free market.

Does the government produce Desired Goods or Services? No. They are the facilitator, or "desire fulfiller." Example: The townspeople want a road built but they continue squabbling over how to pay for it and nothing gets built. In the mean time, they are paying taxes to the government. The government, acting as the people's desire fulfiller, contracts with a road constructor to build it. Government did not produce the Desired Goods or Services, it paid certain people to produce the Desired Goods or Services.

By acting as a people's desire fulfiller, government can participate, but not produce, in a free market. But the people begin to frown when government does not act as a desire fulfiller, and instead spends their taxpayer money on Undesired Goods and Services. In this case, government is not participating in the free market. This is known as "taxation without representation."

Also, when government thinks it doesn't have enough taxpayer money to spend, it creates money for itself, out of thin air (1). That wouldn't be so bad except the government says, "You know the money I created out of thin air? Uh, you taxpayers have to pay it back, even if you don't like what I spent it on."

If that weren't bad enough, creating too much money can cause inflation, which has a long history of crippling citizens' lifestyles (2).

So, keep these things in mind. Otherwise, you might vote for the wrong politician.

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1. https://www.investopedia.com/articles/investing/081415/understanding-how-federal-reserve-creates-money.asp
2. https://www.forbes.com/advisor/personal-finance/why-is-inflation-bad/

(11-5-24)

Right Now

"Do I wish" is one question related to how satisfied we are in our spiritual situation. "Would it be nice" is another question. Do I wish I had a million dollars? No, because when a wish does not come true, there is great disappointment. Would it be nice to have a million dollars? Yes, things would be easier in this world. But since the focus is spiritual, I soon toss that question aside and go on to making the spiritual best of what God has given me right now. 9-28-24

Stop

If you find that stopping to give thanks is an unwelcome interruption, something's wrong. Giving thanks should be like sipping cool water on a hot day. That's real thanks. 10/16/24

Corporate Taxes

In my teens & 20's I didn't understand why we couldn't just tax the corporations a lot more than we do. After many years of consuming info, it looks like there's at least 2 scenarios that occur after corporate taxes are raised:

a. Large corporations can afford to absorb the cost, while many small businesses fail, leading to monopolies of large corporations.
b. All corporations pass the increased cost through to the consumer, increasing inflation.

11/2/24

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Dream from 2-18-25

For many years I've been an auditor type, actively digging into what needs to be done instead of arriving and simply surveying around the surface, reacting to whatever is found there. But early in life I was not naturally inclined to be an auditor. Instead, experience grew me into it.

So I suppose that while asleep, something in my mind, probably the Superego if I had to guess, wrote a script for me to dream that I was responsible for going to check on some high risk patients on a list, on the weekend in a hospital. But instead of checking the list, I went in and just let the staff tell me about what was going on, forgetting about the list. They told me about one patient who didn't really need a visit, so I left work and then found myself talking with an old girlfriend. After that, I remembered the list and was headed back to the hospital with the feeling of dread that I was going to get in trouble for not seeing the patients.

After this I woke up and interpreted the dream such that people in general need to stop sitting around and passively reacting to whatever they see, and instead start actively searching and digging down to find the root of problems and in the process, finding real ways to help others.

But then as I started to write this here, I saw a different interpretation as well: When I quit playing my music keyboard around 1996 in order to spend more family time, I remarked to several people that it felt like breaking up with someone you loved. But by around 1997, I was over it.

Now in 2025, I've taken up music again, recording some voice and guitar over some of those old songs from the 90's. And lately I've been thinking of getting a keyboard again. But time wise, prose writing has taken a bit of a back seat to music in the past year, and I have wondered if I should stop or decrease time with music. I want to do whichever is more helpful to others.

On the one hand, I have hopes that the music recordings will survive me, and help someone in the future that likes the music. On the other hand, I do have about 11 substack.com subscribers that apparently like some of the things I write. Also I mainly hope that my writings survive me as well, and might help others, especially family members who may decide to read them one day.

I don't want to admit it, but it seems that my Superego, and maybe it's God speaking thru the Superego this time, sees that I need to at least spend less time on music. At 67, I can tell my voice is changing for the worse, so I did want to use it as soon as possible. But this dream seems to nudge me into thinking that the greater way I can be helpful may come from writing these notes, or at least not spending so much time on music that other avenues are neglected.

So maybe I need to take a different approach and redouble the efforts to be the auditor of my own life. This falling off the wagon from time to time happens to most everybody in different ways, and can indicate the difference between the Head and the Heart, and that the Head should not be shut out of the negotiations.

2/18/25

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Throwing Money
When more money is spent to decrease a problem, and the problem still increases, there is a deception or misunderstanding somewhere that must be addressed before anything will get any better. Throwing money at a problem is throwing money away. 3-12-25

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I Have a Bad Dream

I dreamed I was in a crime ridden section of a big city at night alone walking, when one threatening guy approached me & I felt unsure about being able to resist. Then after some fighting, another guy joined in against me & I knew I might die. Then I woke up with that feeling that the dream was more real than most. It made me feel for all the people in the world that have actually died that way, and feel deeply thankful I have not experienced that situation. The dream may have been triggered in part due to a video I saw recently about Otze the iceman, a 5000 year old mummy that appeared to have been killed. Another trigger may have been a news story about numerous street gang members finally being put in jail only after a previous politician was removed, & a new politician was elected & directed it to happen.

A year & a half ago I did think for several days that I was going to die in the hospital due to not being treated properly, while in severe pain & shortness of breath. But the feeling from the dream of being attacked on the street was different. The hopelessness in the dream came on much faster, and was overwhelming. I couldn't get back to sleep, due to a strong feeling that violent people should be kept in jail, and those that want to let them out are simply insane, regardless of their IQ. There are evil geniuses and evil average people out there, alive and well, and many of them are in charge of who gets put in jail and let out of jail.

Overall, I'm left with a feeling of thankfulness to the Lord that this hasn't happened to me or any of my loved ones, and the thankfulness has led me to pray for the safety of us all, and inspired me to do & say what I can to keep us safe from evil people in the street or in the government. In fact, history shows that governments have jeopardized the safety of their own people much more than corporations have.

One of the proper ways to use our imaginations is to trigger thankfulness, which moves us into helpfulness. I should repeatedly go back into the memory of this dream, feel the hopelessness, then come out of it into thankfulness, then helpfulness.
4/1/25

Which One to Dwell Upon?

What is **perceived is not always real**, but more importantly, what is **real is not always perceived.**

The first part is applicable when we've misperceived or been deceived in some way. For example, we misperceive through our imagination that someone must be lying simply because we don't like his personality. So we've deceived ourselves, usually in a subconscious way. But it's also possible someone else deceived us, wittingly or unwittingly. Nothing really new here.

But the second part could have to do with our limited human capability to perceive. For example, there are a lot of things going on in the universe that we simply have no perception of whatsoever. And the human hubris just doesn't like to admit to that at all.
5-23-25

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The Never-Ending Perspective Shift

Romans 8:28 says "In all things God works for the good of those who love Him," so thank you God for the lessons and the blessin's because they're all blessin's indeed.

Like most people I've had a lot of pleasurable blessings but also some hard ones. God has given them all to me so I am thankful for them all.

In this article I recount some of the hard blessings. From them, hopefully you will find some avenues toward happiness or at least away from despair, by my examples to follow or to avoid, or things to at least cogitate upon.

Torpedo 1: Meningitis

Around age 4, I was hospitalized with meningitis. A.I. tells me today that back in 1962, for a 4 year old diagnosed with meningitis, "if diagnosed early and treated aggressively with intravenous antibiotics, survival rates improved significantly, potentially reaching 70-90% in well-equipped hospitals. However, delays in diagnosis or treatment could lead to death or severe complications like brain damage, hearing loss, seizures, or developmental delays, affecting 10-20% of survivors."

I vaguely recall learning how to walk again for a brief time after recovery, although it seemed like for months afterward, my Mom was continually reminding me to "pick your feet up" because I slid them across the ground. Eventually the problem disappeared. I had no seizures or hearing loss. But were there any slight degrees of brain damage? I'll never know, so the illness remains part of my overall picture.

Torpedo 2: Guilt-Prone

Sometime later, seems like it might have been around my first few days of kindergarten, the children were all given crayons and pieces of paper, with the instructions to "color the circle" a certain color, I don't recall which color. Everyone around me had finished the assignment using the correct crayon, while I had chosen a random crayon (which someone later told me was purple). And instead of filling in the circle, I had scribbled the crayon a few times across the middle. I recall trying to give the assignment a good effort, then being the one who failed at it, feeling ashamed.

Would most kids have bounced into "I'm going to get the next one right" instead of dwelling in shame? What I felt was "Why was I the only one who failed? Something is wrong with me." It was a sense of defeat.

On another day, our kindergarten class went on a walk outside with the teacher. My best friend, literally the girl next door, fell on the ground and began crying. A good distance away, I saw what happened and began crying myself. When recalling this, some kind of inkling tells me I felt responsible for her falling, even though I wasn't.

Seems like maybe around a year later, I was sitting on the stairs in the house telling my Mom, "You don't love me" – and really feeling it. I don't recall the circumstance – possibly I didn't get my way about something. Many kids go through this, but the episode and the feeling stuck with me for years.

I'm an only child. Though I sometimes played with other kids in the neighborhood, I recall spending a lot of time alone in the house or the yard. My Mom or a babysitter was always around, but I don't recall much interaction with either one, so it seemed I was often alone.

My parents would have parties where 8 or 10 adults would come over. One night after bedtime I recall sitting in my room in the dark by the air conditioner register, listening through it to the adults downstairs laughing and having a good time. I'm not surprised at having the memory, but I wonder why it was recalled as a moment of despair, feeling I was just meant or destined to be shut out.

About age 7, I asked my Mom for a brother or sister. I don't recall her words but the answer indicated in a neutral way that it was not going to happen. I was sad about this, even though some kids at school said I was lucky not to have a brother or sister.

Advancing through grade school, a few comments by other kids about my "only child" status gradually changed from "You're lucky" to "You're spoiled". My Mom did let me wear some above-average-cost clothing items to school, which was a bad idea considering the situation. After a year of this I told her I just wanted clothes like everybody else.

Around the same time I was hearing in church sermons things like "It's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to go to heaven" and a rich young ruler being told by Jesus to "go and sell all you have and give to the poor, then you will have treasure in Heaven; then follow me."

These verses struck me harder than most, considering the "you're spoiled" comments. Not understanding the Biblical context of forgiveness at the time, I had a lot of guilt, thinking I was unfairly privileged. In hindsight, I had internalized this deeply and carried it around for decades.

Of course, other "only children" go through these types of scenarios. Recent research indicates I also had some type of genetic predisposition for being emotionally hypersensitive. Genetics is much more complicated than most people realize. We don't always "get" traits from our near relatives. Sometimes traits are promoted through slight mutations or other factors. But with this hypersensitivity, any self-failure and perceived invalidation were amplified in my mind and intensely internalized. I recall often feeling ashamed that I was inferior.

In addition, I began to feel this inferiority was my fault, leading into what psychologists call "guilt proneness" or "Overactive Superego". But more about this later.

Torpedo 3: Clumsy Communication

Also in hindsight, I probably acted a bit spoiled occasionally, although nothing blatantly alienating. With a sibling I might not have been the center of attention at home quite as often, which might have put a damper on this. But there were a few other "only children" in school who just acted like everybody else. You wouldn't think a "guilt prone" child would act spoiled and entitled. Quite the opposite. So there was another factor brewing that I would not be aware of for decades.

By around age 10, I noticed I could make a friend here and there but not as many as the more popular kids. I didn't realize it, but my communication style wasn't like most kids. In hindsight, I see that I was quieter, often not able to think of a response to keep the conversation going. But not realizing the social implications at the time, I kept going and wasn't down on myself about it.

Around age 12, I subconsciously decided to deny the aforementioned deep guilt, and just do what I thought was fun for me. (In psychological terms, this was where I subconsciously allowed a thought pattern called "the Id" to dominate my thinking, but more about that later.)

Fortunately I knew enough to stay out of trouble. But as I found out years later, denial of guilt just shoves it to the back of the mind, where it festers and causes some unexpected things, until it eventually gets brought to the forefront and dealt with.

Around age 14-15 it became more apparent I was comfortable talking with people one to one, but the more people in the conversational group, the greater likelihood of my failure in the small talk arena. I had a few friends who were guys, and fortunately I fared well talking with girls, so had some girlfriends as well as friends who were girls.

Also at that age I had developed an amateur talent for jamming on a drum set with similar age guitarists and was in the school marching band as well. So music was an expertise of sorts that gave me the feeling I could be

good at something. This general feeling of accomplishment boosted my confidence, but that odd correlation between group size and small talk failure persisted. Unfortunately I tended to ignore those failures instead of dealing with them.

Through my 20's, I played in local rock bands while taking college classes part time, majoring in psychology. I began to realize it wasn't just group size alone that affected my conversational abilities. I was just plain not as good as average at making entertaining small talk, although this varied significantly from time to time.

There was one guy friend who used to light-heartedly call me "Mr. Spock" (the character on the original Star Trek TV series who could only think logically & seemed to lack emotional expression). Spock was portrayed as a good guy and a smart problem solver, so I kind of took it as a compliment.

Fast forward to age 67 where a little research and test-taking tells me I probably was born with Broad Autism Phenotype (B.A.P.), which is just outside the autism spectrum. Those with B.A.P. are essentially normal but do have some social clumsiness of the type I have. Unfortunately, this clumsiness is not like falling off a bike where you immediately know what happened. Minor social infractions usually don't get you much feedback from people. I was clueless through much of it.

But back in my 20's and early 30's there were a few experiences where I did get some feedback and was surprised to be perceived as a bit of a selfish person at times. This started the introspection going. I knew I meant no one any harm and always intended to be a good person. But still occasionally I would get socially overconfident in groups, trying to kid around but lacking the proper filter to do so appropriately. Hindsight today tells me that B.A.P. social perception deficits were significantly contributing to this, but at the time I knew nothing of it.

Genetics does play a part in B.A.P., so try as I might, genetically wired brain pathways were difficult to deal with. But because of the plasticity of the brain, those pathways can be dealt with to a certain point. And this point differs for everyone.

Many people are under the impression that people with autism (& by association, B.A.P.) are simply lacking in the emotion department. This is an oversimplification. While autistic people have difficulty perceiving emotions in others, many are very emotional themselves, and can even be hypersensitive to their own emotions.

Id, Ego, and Superego

Realizing I had acted selfishly at times, new sprouts came up like weeds from that old buried guilt that was never dealt with. I started to worry more that I was being selfish and didn't know it. This of course started a crack in my social confidence, but ever so slowly. It would be another 30 years before I realized the name of that sprouting guilt – an Overactive Superego. Although Freud was wrong about several things, his general definition of the Id, Ego, and Superego was probably accurate.

The Id, Ego, and Superego function in everyone, to varying degrees. The Superego is a morals-based thought pattern. Figuratively, it's like the small angel on one shoulder that you might have seen in cartoons, telling you "That's just not right. Don't do that". It can cause guilt if you go ahead and do it anyway.

The Id is like the cartoon devil on the other shoulder, saying "It's OK, just do what's fun for you." Fun is not always bad, but it's tempting to have too much fun. The Ego is the Parent in the mind, deciding whether to believe the Id or Superego.

The rational Ego should maintain strong control over the steering wheel of the mind, keeping the heart-based Id and Superego in their proper places in the back seats as "The Requesters" of which way to turn.

We've all been through times where our Ego believed our fun-loving Id when it shouldn't have, and we got in a little social trouble. Our Superego then sent us some guilt afterwards. So I had this guilt for being socially clueless and acting selfishly at times. But also, my Superego was also about to burst with the denied guilt that started accumulating around age 12.

B.A.P. contributed to occasional "social cluelessness", which contributed to clueless selfishness. But all the Superego knew was there had been instances of negative feedback regarding my ability to socialize. Its natural reflex was to inject a load of guilt into my mind. And especially since it had been ignored for a number of years, I believe the Ego allowed it to impose a heavy sentence. My Superego had become overactive: an internal Judge, Jury, and even Jailer at times.

But just how *sensitive* to that guilt are we? People who are "guilt-prone" have been studied, as measured by the Guilt and Shame Proneness Scale (G.A.S.P.). And studies show, genetics also plays a part in guilt-proneness.

By age 34 there were inklings of realizing I was guilt-prone at intervals, but never went by the library to read up on it (internet was not widely available). These occasional situations of social cluelessness and heavy guilt didn't happen often enough to cause any long-term despair. Fortunately, my social confidence was sufficiently intact that I was able to propose to my wife, get married, and have kids.

But at age 37 I found myself on the job working with people who were asking me to make some illegal entries into some medical records, and I refused to do it. Subsequently, I started to get blackballed by a couple of managers, which was traumatizing because I had a wife and a child at that point. Then about a month later my Dad passed away.

I called off of work for 2 days to prepare and go to the funeral. But when I returned to work, one of the higher up managers indicated I was not working hard enough, and ignored my statement of my Dad passing away, as if he really didn't believe it.

Both incidents caused a lot of stress. Though I knew I was in the right with the work situation, an odd guilt about it grew in my mind. Could I have handled it differently somehow? Was it my fault? Additionally, my Dad had previously asked me to trim a small patch of grass by the patio. I had put it off until the grass got too high, so when I finally did do it about a week before he passed, there was not much green left near the ground, and much of the grass died. He had said something like, "That's alright. It'll grow back." But a large amount of guilt rose up about that as well. My Superego was in full Overactive mode, like never before.

The crack in my social self-confidence widened. But I was able to find another job before quitting the blackballers, fortunately. The next couple of years went well and we had another baby. Things were looking up.

Then another blackballing incident occurred. I wasn't sure how it started until much later. It was something I said one day that was normal for my job, but it affected another supervisor who thought I was power playing. She did ask me about it but apparently my explanation was not to be believed. It was downhill from there.

The Overactive Superego began pounding my mind again with guilt, and feelings like "You just don't communicate well, so you deserve this problem." My social confidence sunk to a new low, and I became depressed.

Around that same time, an old friend from out of town called & said he might be able to visit, but I was so distraught I told him I was having a tough time & that maybe a later date would be better. Apparently I did not communicate my despair well enough. I was unable to reach him again.

Again my Superego rose up so high, higher than it's ever been, and crushed me down into a deeper depression. Why? Other people go through bad work situations and they're not wallowing in the mud the way I was. With

my family, I felt OK. But interactions with people at church suffered as I began to verbally stumble due to low confidence.

Still I was determined to move forward. I quit the blackballers again and in 1997 opened my own nutrition store in a storefront. Optimism rose as sales increased. Then in 2000 there was an economic recession, and our numbers started falling below the breakeven point by early 2001. Walmart had also started selling some of the same items I sold, which was unexpected and made things worse. Then 9/11/2001 hit, and people curtailed buying my products even further due to not knowing if another terrorist attack, maybe on the grid, was around the corner. The store closed in late 2001.

My Superego hit a record high, giving me feelings that basically, if my communication skills had been better, I could have sold more products and kept the store open. My self-esteem hit a record low. My wife had to work for a while, then I found a job.

Long story short, blackballers eventually hit me again in 2002, but this time I pinpointed it to a female supervisor who physically & verbally flirted with me. I did not respond like she wanted, so after a few weeks I was purposefully misinterpreted by her and two of her supervisor friends in another department I had to work alongside.

I was faced now with a repeating pattern: A conflict would arise and I could not talk my way out of it. My Superego lambasted me for poor communication. I still did not know about B.A.P. at that point, but I did know enough to rate myself about a 6 out of 10 on communication skills under usual circumstances, while only a 2 out of 10 under social pressure.

Self-Sabotage

I began to sense my Superego giving me a feeling at times that "I am going to disappoint people", and that it was going to be through poor communication. I sometimes had odd feelings that social self-sabotage was a fair and deserved path for me.

Interestingly I did not experience these feelings all the time or with family. But I did experience them with people who I thought about maybe becoming friends with. And sometimes it was a self-fulfilling prophecy.

It seemed like several times a year I would blurt out something oddly off-putting but not totally offensive, just enough so that a potential friend would no longer be a potential friend. It was like the Superego was directing me to "Go ahead and mess up the situation now before a friendship gets started, so you won't mess it up later when things would be more complicated."

In hindsight, I also wonder if my Superego began to see a possible power play for itself, sometimes choosing not speak up at all, allowing the Id to pull me into acting more important than I was, so it could come down extra hard on the Id and Ego later, with its big, Overactive "I told you so" hammer.

The Lord and my family were the only bright spots. I found another job in 2002, so was able to quit the most recent blackball situation. Things were actually good for a few of years, and my social confidence began to recover.

Then another company, with a reputation for cleaning house, bought us out. In 2005, after a few months, most every department head had quit under pressure except me and one other.

Then I began being misinterpreted by my supervisor, who apparently conspired with an employee to route me out. Their case was weak enough however that management had to offer a compensation package which I took. Later, I found out from the only surviving department head that my ex-supervisor had taken my old job as soon

as I left. (Interestingly, that ex-supervisor had mentioned to me previously about wanting to work in that part of town, so go figure.) Again, the Superego pounded me with "You're just a poor communicator. You should have been able to defend yourself."

At this point the front of my mind had become aware of the repeating pattern scripted in the back of my mind: I would succeed for a while, then something would happen to blow it out of the water.

If success was not eventually sabotaged by my clumsy communication, my Superego would step in to "finish the job." Otherwise, any outside power-tripper attempting to sabotage me would effectively get the green light from my Superego while it handcuffed my ability to defend myself.

So I remained in fear of my own social demise. Any power-players nearby could figuratively smell the fear like sharks smell blood in the water.

Smelling this fear was really more about "Othello Error" (1), where the power-player fails to recognize that a truthful person suspected of lying may show the same signs of emotion as a liar. An innocent suspect may show a reliable fear expression (verbal, facial, body language) because he is afraid of being falsely accused.

From around age 12 to 22, I recall blushing if I thought someone around me was going to get in trouble, especially if I might also be falsely suspected. But poor word coordination under this type of occasional perceived pressure lasted for many more years, and likely contributed to Othello Error in those around me.

Decades of enduring the Othello Error compounded over the years had lead to toxic guilt and false responsibility (2). Now, looking back on my childhood emotions, no longer trying to block out anything, it's clear I had low self-esteem & was often disappointed in myself, for social reasons.

Torpedo 4: Meige

But back to 2005. Around that time, my wife had just graduated and got a good job. Our plan was for me to go back to school then, which I did. School went well at first but not without some seriously stressful challenges near the end.

This, along with the long-term realization of my repeating pattern and the Superego riding roughshod over my Ego, is what I believe cumulatively set off a condition called Meige Syndrome in 2008. Meige causes some of the facial muscles to contract or twitch in odd ways, to varying degrees, at unpredictable times, producing some slightly odd facial expressions. And as you might guess, Meige has a genetic component that causes some people to be susceptible to it, under the right circumstances. There are certain prescriptions that can cause facial muscle abnormalities as well, but I wasn't on any of those. In my case, botox injections for a year worked fairly well, with about 80% improvement.

So with B.A.P., guilt-proneness (Overactive Superego), and Meige syndrome, my ability to communicate face to face was hampered, to put it mildly.

In 2009, after several months in the new career, I quit my job due to another power-player episode. I was pounded by the Superego again for this, with feelings of overall inadequacy.

But with the Lord and my family, I pulled it together and started another job, taking a little solace that I had only about 13 more years until retirement.

My new educational degree allowed me to be hired as a manager over another lesser-credentialed employee who had expected to be chosen as the manager. It went well for a short while until the resentful employee started trying to sabotage me.

By this time I had grown sick and tired of being a door mat, and was determined to defend myself. (A quote from Marcus Aurelius comes to mind: "It is not fit that I should give myself pain, for I have never intentionally given pain even to another.")

While at work, I carefully took a lot of tedious notes on various situations. When it finally came down to my supervisor getting involved, my defense was solid. The resentful employee went to another shift, and things went well for several more years, the longest stretch yet.

My social confidence improved. Then another power player started spreading misinformation. I started to see a pattern that some people just get their anger thrills from power-playing. But more importantly, I increasingly saw myself as a person who deserved to be defended, just as I might defend someone else. Again I kept copious notes on many situations, so my confidence level was maintained.

Fortunately I never had to use the notes, because a better job came along. This appeared to be the beginning of a turnaround.

Indeed, this new job went for 5 years until a power-player tinkered with me again. And again I had notes along with numbers, so management offered me a much easier slot with the same pay. Not trusting them, I transferred to a different branch, to work under a supervisor I had worked with before, who was a great person.

I worked there for about a year until another employee complained that I was sending too many messages about unnecessary items. I launched right into copying all these messages and handing them to the supervisor. She agreed there was nothing wrong with any of my messaging. The other employee backed off and actually became very friendly after that. I worked there a couple more years, until age 65, without incident and then decided to work there on an "as needed" basis. They offered me some work a few times after that but financially, I didn't need it, so didn't do any more work for them.

Into retirement now, I still have episodes of social clumsiness, guilt-proneness, letting the Id have too much control, and some intermittent effects of Meige, but overall much improved compared to previous years.

How to Avoid All These Problems

What can we learn from my multi-decade example? I offer a few tidbits of advice for young people:

Keep defensive notes. You'll never need 99% of them, but that 1% will be like gold when you need it.

If your boss is a good person, try to keep working there, despite any annoyances.

If you notice some difficulty communicating, look into it. (You now have a.i. so it's easier.) You might have a condition which there might be treatments for, or at least you might be pointed towards an occupation more suited to your communication style (Believe me, this is no small thing).

Recognize the power of your subconscious mind. If you think you're guilt-prone, read up on it to shine a spotlight on it. Once a spotlight is on your subconscious, it can no longer operate totally in the dark, and you have a way to start countering any self-destructive activity it may be causing.

Your Toolkit

I didn't realize it at the time, but what I needed as a small hypersensitive child was for someone to tell me several things:

You're born with a special toolkit that God put together for you. Your toolkit includes some thinking tools, some emotion tools, some speaking tools, some body tools, and many more.

God also gave other people toolkits. Some of their tools are like some of yours, and some are different from yours. Their toolkits are all different from each other in some ways, and alike each other in some ways.

No two people have the same exact toolkit. God gave us some different tools from each other, so we can learn how best to use our different tools, to help people in different ways.

You might have some tools you won't even know about for years to come.

Someone might not understand your different tools, and you might not understand theirs. You might wonder why God gave some person a tool that seems better than yours.

That person's tool might be better than yours, but that person is not better than you.

That person may use that better tool to help more people. Your tool might not help very many people, but God loves you and that person the same. So that person is not better than you, and you are not better than that person. Both of you are loved the same by God. So having the better tool does not mean the person is better.

Still, why did God give one person a better tool? We don't know why God does some things, because He is smarter than us, so we have to trust Him that it is best. He wants you to focus on how to use your tools the best, not focus on someone else having better tools. One reason God put us here is to learn. One of the best things to learn is to focus on using our own tools to help others, not moping around about somebody else's tools.

Gratitude Attitude

Be thankful as often as possible, especially to God. I've known this for decades, but around age 65 started practicing it much more deeply and often, still increasing now. I was surprised to discover that gratitude to God has a significant effect on the Id and Superego: They both somehow stay in their back seats while the Ego controls the steering wheel, as it should.

I think this is because in the process of being thankful to God, your mind is admitting there is a power higher than the self, and it is also a moral power. The Superego, being moral-based, no longer thinks it has total responsibility for policing morals and passing judgment such as deep guilt or even self-sabotage.

The Superego concedes that "whatever God has for us" is the truly fair outcome, since God is superior and His definition of Fair is the only 100% correct definition. The Superego no longer has to devise and implement some sort of self-punishment.

The mechanics of the Ego, Id, and Superego system continue to work like this: In whatever situation God has placed me, as long as I use that situation to be helpful, the Superego is satisfied to defer to God. When I'm unhelpful, the Superego can cause some guilt.

But before that guilt grows into a pathological mud pit, if I give thanks for God's forgiveness of that unhelpfulness, the guilt is lifted, and automatically in the psyche there springs up a desire for the self to increase efforts to be helpful.

I think most of us are wired so that when someone helps us, a desire springs up to help them. God has helped us by forgiving us, so naturally most of us then have a desire to help God. But since He doesn't need any help, He directs us to help others (and to take care of ourselves so that we can better help others).

Now in social situations where I start feeling worried about saying something wrong, I try to focus on being thankful to God, and it pretty much works. But this situational thankfulness occurs on top of the daily laid concrete block foundation of gratitude to God numerous times a day. And for it to be concrete, I have to stop & imagine for a couple of minutes, just how bad my life and especially my future spiritual life in eternity would be without being saved from hell. In other words, imagine how good it is by imagining how bad it would be without it.

The song "God Shaped Hole" comes to mind, with the lyric "There's a God shaped hole in all of us". A.i. tells me that "the phrase 'God shaped hole in all of us' is often attributed to the French philosopher and mathematician Blaise Pascal, though he never used those exact words. The concept comes from his work *Pensées* (published posthumously in 1670), where he wrote:

'What else does this craving, and this helplessness, proclaim but that there was once in man a true happiness, of which all that now remains is the empty print and trace? This he tries in vain to fill with everything around him, seeking in things that are not there the help he cannot find in those that are, though none can help, since this infinite abyss can be filled only with an infinite and immutable object; in other words, by God himself.' "

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8/6/25

Additional memories:
Odd feeling that hit me a few times about girlfriend relationships through the years, that I didn't deserve the benefits of a relationship.
Early grade school episode of getting angry at another kid and saying "It's not fair".

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Take Care
Yesterday I saw a story about a person who had left 2 kids locked in a car in the heat, so the police had to break the window to get them out. Then last night I had a dream where our dog was somewhere where it was hot, but I decided to do something else real quick & come back & put the dog in a cool place. A second later, I came back and the dog had died from the heat. It was so emotionally upsetting I woke up immediately & went & petted the dog. Later, I interpreted the dream as a reminder that I should not slack off of being thankful to God, because this affects my decision-making in many ways, including being careful and caring for others. 7/10/25

Underrated
Being deeply grateful in your mind for many of the timeless things, as often as possible, is a most underrated therapy. 7/27/25

From Conquests to Service
At 15, I recall telling someone I looked at life as "conquests". Hindsight tells me this was also the mindset

behind the adrenaline stress of "I will make this happen", "I know what's going to happen", & "Go for what feels good in this world."

After years of seeing what works & what doesn't, I'm grateful to God for my salvation, which leads me to see life as "service", which is the mindset of "I will just give my best effort to help, and God knows what will actually happen". Then, there is a deeper, long-term pleasure that comes from this mindset. 8/26/25

From Temptation to Gratitude

When temptation strikes, for example the desire to eat when already full, it's often because I allow myself to dwell on how good the food would be instead of how bad hell would be, and how grateful I am for not having to go there.

However, different people have different strength food-cravings, which is at least partly genetic. Stronger hard-wired food cravings make things more difficult, so being spiritually thankful does not work exactly the same way for everyone. Therefore, we cannot expect to discern accurately in our human minds just how hard someone else is trying or praying to avoid temptation.
8/29/25

From Affinity to Infinity

There are people who have great affinity for one another but as the years go by, this affinity fades. However, some may take solace in being together in spirit for infinity. 9/3/25

As the Blind See It

Many people look forward to travel when they retire. But I think of pleasure travel as a blind person might think of it. Most of it is a visual experience, which the blind have no use for. I've gradually gravitated towards using my brain for other things, such as the pondering and reviewing and creation of ideas that might help others.

If loved ones are going on a trip, I love to go with them. Some of the sights are interesting but the main attraction for me is the face to face conversations. 9/14/25

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Do As I Say, Not As I Did

Looking back through the hindsight telescope, it's safe to say that just economically speaking, I went down the wrong road for about 12 years. I pursued music, along with part time college in psychology, & part time entry-level jobs from age 18 to age 30.

In music, I had made just enough money to figuratively buy some wood now and then, to throw on the fire of hope that the occupation would eventually become lucrative. But a 30th birthday has a sobering effect, cutting through even a mind awash in the call of those alluring musical sirens.

It would have been great to settle on the right career track by age 19, 20, or 21. This is a time where many young people stumble through knowing the *least* about the all-you-can-eat buffet of career choices, while ironically needing to know the *most*.

Watch out for the entertainment industry. It's easy to listen to those who succeeded in it, when they say "never give up". But you never hear from the huge hordes of humankind who never gave up on getting a piece of the that pie, only to find out after 10 or 20 years that their slice was translucently thin.

Cut your losses earlier than age 30. The people I saw go on to make decent money in music had obvious way-above-average talent by age 20. That should be the cut off year for the music business at least.

Also watch out for college counselors. They are there to sell you classes. Around age 20 (1978 B.I. – "Before

Internet"), I asked the university psych department counselor "Will I be able to get a pretty good job in psychology, with a bachelor's?" Of course her answer was a most emphatic "Yes!" Subsequently, the only career-useful thing I learned was that I should check out a variety of sources before setting out on a life-changing path.

Finally getting on the right path by the ripe age of 30 means you overcome more hardship (whether your own fault or not). In my case, I had to backtrack down that wrong road and start from the beginning again, feeling like I was living in one of those "inadequacy dreams", sitting in a college classroom full of students 10 and 12 years younger than me.

But this story might help someone else who's in the same boat. So here is the most important part of my story, and it goes way beyond the music business or any college degrees:

There are those who believe fairness will eventually prevail. If you search your soul and find this is you, then you are very fortunate. This unshakable core belief allows you to see that everything you have been through is for a reason based on fairness. And you trust that it is based on a fairness you may not understand at this time.

Trust in an all-pervasive fairness opens the door to belief in a higher power. The problem is, people define fairness in different ways, so we see different interpretations of fairness and different religions, often at odds with one another.

But with your unshakable belief that fairness will prevail, you may feel that even these interpretation problems are part of some overall fairness plan. And if it's a plan, there's a higher power behind it.

So what does your belief in a higher power look like? For me, it involves being grateful. I was slow picking up on the clues, but finally observed that I function best when gratitude is my main mindset.

This of course leads to the question: *Why* am I grateful? Answer: Because my higher power has forgiven me of wrongdoing, so that I am totally accepted *as is*. This is a relief beyond comprehension, and causes a desire to serve others, to spring up in my heart.

Which belief system prioritizes Forgiveness, Acceptance as is, Gratitude, Service? I invite you to explore all you want. But for me, it's Christianity. (10/11/25)

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The Jaded Voter

You may have heard the question that if you had cancer and there were two surgeons, one rated at 90% for successful cancer surgeries but rated at 10% for bedside manner, and another surgeon rated 90% for bedside manner and 80% for successful cancer surgeries, which one would you choose?

Most would choose the surgeon with terrible bedside manner, because great bedside manner is not going to save you. Likewise, politicians turn policy into law, and you must obey the law - but if you end up in jail, it's not because of a politician's personality. It's because you broke the law that came from the policy.

However, some say a politician's personality seeps into the legislation he/she has crafted. "Exactly!" one might exclaim, "Personality created the policy that created the law. So you *should* vote on personality!" If this has the ring of an oversimplification, your perception is correct.

What affects your life are the printed words in the law, which actually are quite often at odds with a politician's words and personality. Fortunately, all the printed words in laws, proposed laws, and policies are available for all to see.

"Nobody's got time to read all that." True. We rely on media to give us a quick rundown of which party is up to no good. But is media fair?

Young people have not been around long enough to become properly jaded about fairness and human nature. This jading process is a gradual unveiling of real human nature as the years go by. Young-uns tend to see things in this world more often in "good or bad" and "all or none" terms. But as a person ages, the gray areas developing between "all & none" become not a fog, but ironically a clearer view of so many exceptions to the rules, that we realize deception is everywhere, albeit more saturated in some spots than others.

People naturally want to choose a political party that is less saturated in deception, so we look to media as a shining beacon of truth. But even your favorite media is no exception to deception. What next? Diving into the details often exposes deception, or at least exposes some steep slopes that require greater caution.

For example, one survey found that only 3.4% of journalists belonged to one of the two major parties (1), which is a significant under-representation, compared to the general public.

"Well, most journalists are fair enough to see beyond their own party." Draw your own conclusions, but one thing I've learned is that journalists are human too and therefore are carriers of human nature. They usually are more skilled at the art of "nuanced persuasion" than average. Some use certain wording that flies just under our "fairness alarm" radar, leaning in one direction with such slight nuance that you are subconsciously lulled into leaning in that direction also.

Sometimes journalists report on research studies that affect politics. Most of these studies are completed by university faculty. In 2024, a survey found that at Yale University, faculty members were split 28 to 1 on their membership to the two major political parties (2). Again, a significant disproportion, compared to the voting public.

"But surely, faculty put aside their voting habits when doing rigorous scientific studies." …I learned in a class called "Experimental Methodology" that "experimenter bias" does occur - consciously, subconsciously, or by accident and can be so subtle that journal editors don't pick up on it. There's even an organization called retractionwatch.com, which chronicles scientific study retractions.

Of course, surveys can be biased like studies can, so remember that the more surveys & studies you read about, the more you can sense a pattern of truth in what the majority of them agree on.

As the years go by, one pattern that holds true is that I've seen good ideas & truth presented well & also presented poorly; and I've seen bad ideas & lies presented well & also presented poorly. But I remain surprised at how high the *percentage* is, of bad ideas and lies presented well.

I don't mean to bring your optimism about the human race crashing into an iceberg. But proper jading is a necessary process that brings us a balanced amount of healthy doubt. It's kind of why the phrase "cautiously optimistic" was created.

You're not going to find an unbiased news source, so the best bet to get to the likely political truth is:

First, ask your favorite a.i. something like "Throughout history, what concepts have been the biggest influencers in politics?" One of them will likely be economics. You might also ask "In history, what has been the most successful economic system?" Unfortunately, the answer will come as a surprise to some.

Second, listen to those you agree with, on your favorite news source. That's easy.

Third, as much as you will hate it, listen to those you don't agree with, on their news sources.

After trying these 3 things, I dare say your opinion will likely be less biased than most.

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12.5.25

++++++++++++++++++++++++++

Irony?
It's ironic to us humans that God has us live in the physical world, while our task here is to learn the spiritual world is more important. Of course, God sees His plan clearly, without irony. (12.14.25)

In the face of increasing opposition, your resolve will be either worn down or strengthened. Monitor yourself for this before you make a bad decision. (1/15/26)

Flexibility vs. Stubbornness

Everyone knows that many toddler mindsets have to be let go of, during the maturing of the self. But it seems as time goes by we also lose more of the flexibility to let go of unhelpful mindsets in general. So this stubbornness should be remembered and worked on continually, because time continues to go by. 2/6/26

One human imperfection that may go unnoticed is that when I hear the notification sound on my device, I might be *more* anxious to check & see if someone "liked" *my* comment, than if I had attributed "my" comment to God's wisdom. 2/6/26

Econ 101
The 1st lesson in economics is human nature: People are creatures of incentive. When times are easy, many of us lay back. If everyone is paid the same whether they choose to lay back or not, there's no incentive for anyone to work hard, so productivity drops. Therefore, socialism and communism warp natural incentive. (8/2/25 with major edit **2/8/26**)

Adrenaline Attitude

I've been taking beta blockers off-and-on about 40 years, for "palpitations". Beta blockers basically quiet down some aspects of adrenaline in your system.

As happens with many drugs, when you stop them suddenly there's a rebound effect where your symptoms are worse than ever. Needless to say, a few years ago when the doctor stopped my beta blocker on the day of my cardiac surgery, I began having extremely bad palpitations (called PVC's) after waking up. It was excruciatingly painful because the heart muscle contraction was more intense that I had ever experienced. Couple that with having fresh incisions inside my heart (for mitral valve repair), and there was pain way beyond what I had ever known.

As if this wasn't enough, I had been taken back into surgery to fix an internal bleed that was so bad my family thought I might die. I suspect a lot of cardiac cells *did* die during that episode, because years later, my heart is still not near strong enough to allow me to work out in the gym, the way I was able to work out

regularly *before* the surgery.

This low cardiac output caused me such shortness of breath in the hospital that I felt I was choking to death on-and-off for days. In fact, I would say the shortness of breath was worse than the pain. But there was no choice – I had both.

Nurses rely on the "oxygen sat" monitor (usually placed on the finger) to gauge shortness of breath. My oxygen sat was reading in the normal range, so my complaints of shortness of breath were dismissed. But as I have seen in my work as an RN, oxygen sat does not tell the whole story, and it is entirely possible to have a normal oxygen sat and extreme shortness of breath at the same time.

It's well documented that when a person's breathing is restricted, adrenaline surges and he goes into panic. Upon being awakened after surgery, I recall the ventilator was in my mouth, but I could not breathe as rapidly or as deeply as I wanted. Apparently the ventilator was *not* set to where I could breathe over it, despite claims to the contrary by the hospital staff. I felt I was being choked slowly, so my hands flew into the air, and I was restrained and sedated. But even after the ventilator removal, I still could not catch my breath for days, so adrenaline continued at extreme levels, and I did not sleep for 3 days. I spent much of the time with eyes closed praying and attempting to ignore the pain and shortness of breath.

Here's the interesting psychological part – With all this going on, I became angry. Adrenaline can do that, yes, but I had been informed by family that the doctor said the cause of the bleed was that "the stylet must've nicked an artery", which meant someone dropped the ball during surgery.

In addition, after numerous requests, the doctor would not start my beta blocker back, to quiet down my heart. So it constantly felt like it was about to pound out of my chest. My heart *rate* was fine, but the *contraction* of the cardiac muscle was unbearable. Nurses said that my blood pressure was too low to start back the beta blocker, but I knew better, after watching for decades how beta blockers affected my blood pressure.

Also, the pain wasn't being treated adequately, which pushed out even more adrenaline. So with the pain and shortness of breath themselves, as well as *knowledge* of the *mistakes* causing me to nearly bleed to death, to *keep enduring* shortness of breath and excruciating cardiac contractions, I became angry but managed to focus it mostly on the situation.

I kept telling the nurses that pain was "10 out of 10", but 95% of the time I was met with "Some pain is to be expected and it's not time for your pain med yet." After about the 10th time of this, with all this adrenaline going, I snapped "You mean a guy like me in this situation is normal for this much pain?" To my surprise, the nurse got a look on her face like she had just been cursed at by a drill sergeant. She walked out of the room and I didn't see her again the rest of my admission, except once sitting at the desk.

Being an RN myself, I had seen that look on co-workers and knew it meant she had been greatly offended by my snappy comment, and that she likely had told an exaggerated version of it to her co-workers, to let off some steam.

I was by far not having the usual outcome for mitral repair surgery. And since my complaints were not verifiable through any type of available monitoring device, I was likely dismissed as a great exaggerator. My adrenaline fueled comment, as well as the fact that I told another nurse I was about to leave the hospital against medical advice because I could not take it anymore, branded me in their minds as one of those snowflake patients that claims 10 out of 10 pain with a hangnail.

In nursing school, you are taught "Pain is what the patient says it is." Unfortunately I had witnessed co-worker nurses over the years ignore this teaching, and my episode in the hospital was no different. But there was one nurse practitioner in the middle of the night who did listen, and got an order to start a small dose of beta blocker. The effect was short lived but it was a relief, and after that, the doctor increased it gradually so that after a few days the pain and shortness of breath went away.

In hindsight, I wondered if different people would have had a much different mindset than I had in the hospital. In those first few days, I felt that if I did not stand and speak out forcefully for myself, I could have easily curled up and died. And I was not about to do that. (2/16/26)

Social Tourette's

In wars, I suspect the people who have a more prevalent sense that their side might not have the moral high ground after all, will not fight as hard in many cases. Soldiers might even come to this moral realization during the fight itself.

It can happen socially as well, like when millions of Americans watched and listened to commentary on the civil rights movement on TV in the 1960's, and then record numbers had a change of heart, greatly accelerating the positive change in race relations through the 1970's.

And it can happen inside a single person, as it did to me. I hadn't committed any crimes, but as I took a deeper look into my moral status over the years, I developed guilt about spots of selfishness here and there, and also had low self-esteem from not being an "up to par" verbal communicator at times.

In these situations, Christianity can help heal any increasing guilt and low self-esteem. But in my case, even though the guilt came on relatively suddenly, the healing process has been taking decades. Looking around at how other people seemed to handle guilt, and doing a lot of reading about it, I began to suspect I had some kind of inborn predisposition for heavier guilt than most people would feel in the same circumstances.

Among us "inappropriately-heavy guilt-feelers", I wonder if there could be a sort of "social Tourette's syndrome" where the person's self-esteem sinks down to a point that the self believes this is where it deserves to stay. In this case, when things are going well for a time, the self makes some statements or actions out in the social world that put a damper on friendships, thus keeping the self in a sadly familiar territory.

I've written about this "heavy guilt-feeler" concept previously, but there are some different perspectives and wording in this particular entry that might help further elucidate the subject. Fortunately at age 68 I've almost worked my way through it and out the other side, thanks to God and my family. But it will never reach perfection in the human world. So, learning to accept the imperfection is a big part of the working through it. (2/23/26)

The Changing Beach Perspective

Sometimes now at age 68, I see videos of beaches and think, "That looks nice, it would be nice to be there." But the part of my mind that thinks that, is growing smaller while the part that feels that love and conversations with loved ones holds much greater value, is growing larger. Then I look at the beach video and think "That could be a really lonesome and depressing place without any love." 3/5/26

The Supernatural

It's a difficult thing that people go through, learning what to believe and what not to believe, in the supernatural realm. We cannot detect the supernatural with physical means. Otherwise, it wouldn't be supernatural. So instead, we have faith in certain supernatural beliefs.

We use our imaginations to help us picture and understand the physical realm as well as the supernatural or spiritual realm. There are things people disagree on in both the physical and spiritual realms. In the physical realm, scientific proof is sought after. In the spiritual realm, it is a matter of faith.

There are spiritual things I believe, such as Jesus taking all the sins of all Christians upon Him, and paying the price for those sins. And there are spiritual things I don't believe, such as portrayed in many movies or on TV. There's no logical reason for faith. But through a series of gut feelings, I have comfortably settled into my faith and there's no shaking me out of it. (3-22-26)

End of Chapter – Perspective Shift

Principle

Reward, No Award
Sometimes, a quiet and deep satisfaction is the only reward we receive for standing firm on virtuous principle. And this satisfaction suffices as a reward, quite well. (Substack 1/4/24)

New Year's Resolution
Be not more than superficially concerned with superficialities. (Substack 12/31/23)

Reactions
It is important to watch people's reactions to what we say, but there comes a point at which principle is more important than people's reactions.

Emotion, Virtue
One thing that excites me is the determined and unwavering adherence to virtuous principle. Have a passion for the virtues.

Communication, Hypocrisy, Forgiveness
What good is a well-said or well-written, deeply emotional statement from someone if it is not anchored in long lasting and steady principle, and is blown off course by selfish winds? These kinds of statements become hollow, shallow, and discarded. God asks us to forgive those who contradict themselves. But remember, forgiveness is not submission.

Steadfast vs Erratic
About some people it could be said: As strongly as they feel about something, they can instantly change course and feel just as strongly about something else that is contradictory or at least not pertinent. In a word: "Fickle". And their principle runs as deep as a mud puddle.

Vigilance
Remain strongly vigilant in mind, so that you do not become unpleasantly surprised.

Risk Assessment
If there is a dispute among you as to whether your common adversary is over-estimated or under-estimated, everyone should recall from their own experience that the worst thing is to under-estimate him.

Minimizing the Self-Judge
The more you live by God's principles, the more your mind doesn't feel the need for the internal judge and jury.

Resilience
Resilience – at what cost? Shallower emotion? In some, maybe so. But we may need some of these people in our population to meet changing demands, so that the whole of the population would not be steam-rolled into a flat existence. Of course, this is one of the many double-edged swords that must be coupled by Virtue.

Protecting the Innocent - 1
One of the major motivations constantly present in the back of the mind of a soldier is, I believe, to protect the innocent.

Protecting the Innocent - 2
I am basically a good person, and I have my shadow by my side, like a firearm, to protect the innocent if need be.

How to Hold
Bravely, but without anger, hold to your principles. In fact, do it with a pleasant, humble attitude. All of these are principles themselves.

Intuition, Integrity, Principle
That little nagging feeling that you are unmoored from your principles is more significant than you think. Stop and pray to God to get your heart back in the right place. It's no small thing. Otherwise, the Lord may end up having to show you in some unpleasant way, that it was no small thing after all.

Determination
The dust is not going to settle, so neither am I.

Do Right Regardless
Our task is to do right, wherever we find ourselves, feast or famine, or anywhere in between.

Effort, Virtue
Faith with less virtuous effort is less faith. Love with less virtuous effort is less love. But only God knows the difficulty of our efforts. Focus on what you can do, not what you think someone else can do.

If you know someone very well, you may have a fair idea of the effort they could put forth, but remember that you don't know every detail of what they are dealing with at that moment.

Principle vs Self-preservation
Some people operate more on self-preservation, while others operate primarily on morals. Often these can go together, but sometimes they diverge. It is at this time the mask comes off the one who wears it. (10-11-20)

Adherence to Principle
Be a good follower: Follow the guidelines. Don't fall into the weak place of rationalizations and least resistance, or you will always find an excuse for not being able to maximize. At the same time, be adaptable and open to ways of sticking with the guidelines.

I can sense there is a bedrock reality of widely accepted morals and likelihoods that the heart sometimes ignores or insidiously, surreptitiously slips away from. Focus on this more often, as a matter of daily practice, to frequently bring the heart back to it, in order to avoid the consequences of the heart wandering aimlessly away. If it wanders too long or too far, Adversity will bring back this focus. To prevent the heart from wandering, the imagination of how bad things could get must become a frequent practice in order to maintain footing.

Integrity, Innocence, Reason
There is a strange relief and excitement in promising yourself to hold to principle no matter what. The question becomes, is that principle good or evil, for certainly as Proverbs says, all a person's ways seem right to him. Doing good usually involves helping the innocent. However, people define innocent in different ways. I think logic and reason should be the primary lens we use to see who is innocent, because emotion most often blinds us.

Fluctuation
People have Fluctuating Principles, but this in itself varies from person to person, and in the same person from time to time or one situation to the next. I have written about one example of this that I call Selective Compassion. Anyway, some people's Principles fluctuate more than others, and some would have a higher PFS (principle fluctuation score) than others, if a researcher were to ever develop a test for it.

The Principle of Equal Rights
Lord help us to stand up for ourselves not because of any superiority, but instead because of our own Equal Rights. And in doing so, we help others understand that "equal rights" is not a pendulum that swings one way and then the other, but instead is the halting of those extremes. Also as we assert our own equal rights, we are in effect protecting those who depend on us, so that we, and then they in turn, are not taken advantage of.

Morality
As Martin Luther King Jr. knew, you can't just simply be a rule follower. The rule has to be moral. And the guide to morality is the Bible.

Work vs. Vacation
Whether I immediately like something is secondary. First is whether it needs to be done. This speaks to the two sides of the heart: one side desires the satisfaction of having done the right thing. The other side desires instant

and easy gratification. We strive to emphasize the right thing. But also we require enough time off from this striving, to maintain sanity. So there is a balance.

Virtue
Profound virtue in a person may be popular or unpopular. Or it may be unrecognized, except by God.

Appreciation Mirage
'Tis worse than a fruitless endeavor to go around fantasizing that you are appreciated in ways that you have no real cause to believe. Make it a matter of Principle to avoid this seductive process. (3/13/21)

Cling or Carried
Ironically, it is easier to cling to God's principles during hard times than in easy times. And God is like a rock. You can cling to him as the waves crash upon you, or you can let yourself be carried by the waves, and then be dashed upon Him, as He does not change. (4/18/21)

Trellis, Heart and Head
Principle is the Trellis, or scaffolding, upon which the grapevine-like Heart can grow, as long as that scaffolding is sufficiently anchored and grounded in the Head. (6/13/21)

Acting Out vs. Acting On
Sadly, nowadays there is a lot of talking about principle, and not so much acting on it.

Your Rights, Too
I think, if you are more willing to fight for fairness based on principle, then you are probably more likely to fight for your own rights, and not just for the rights of others. Otherwise, you would be in conflict with your own principle. (9/18/21)

A person brave enough to stand up for the rights of others, should be brave enough to stand up for his own rights, in order to keep standing up for the rights of others. (9/19/21)

Principle vs. Reaction
There are those who live primarily on principle, and those who live primarily on reaction. But there's good and bad in each. This good & bad bifurcation is what's too often forgotten, amid the popular trend today to oversimplify. (11/12/21)

Suffer or Not
We shouldn't say that to be righteous, suffering is required first. Instead, righteous principle comes first, whether you suffer or not. (2/17/22)

One Thing
It seems that trustworthiness is based on integrity, which is in turn based on adherence to principle. (6/10/22)

Anger vs. Determination
In many things a new level can be reached. One is being able to detect selfishness, in the self. One way to see this is when I start making *selfish value assignments* to things or people. This is a short-term emotional product, as opposed to the more correct long term emotional product called "principle", which does not blow with the wind and usually does not involve anger, but instead, determination. (2022)

Heart Principle
Strong adherence to virtuous principle may enable your heart to identify with some of those righteous moments during the American Revolution. In heart language, that would translate as: "Principle can take you back". (10/1/22)

Harder to Live by Principle

One reason people in general are more deceptive now in the U.S., is because we're being trained into it by the sheer number of things we're asked to do in our jobs every day. More now than ever, you have to pick which corporate rules to break based on the likelihood of not getting caught, just to keep your job. This of course makes it ever more difficult to live by principle.

Increasing selfishness, laziness, & loss of morals in the general population has caused (1) some managers to pass the buck increasingly to employees, and (2) some employees to be less trustworthy, causing managers to create time consuming safeguards and checkpoints that further slow down any process.

In addition, there's a long-standing trend for entities (governments, companies, etc) to become top-heavy, creating too many managerial positions. In order to keep their jobs, these unnecessary managers naturally scrutinize lower level employees, creating more time-consuming compliance-related tasks that eventually decrease productivity. This of course builds on the slow-down occurring in (2) above.

So, both the ethical and the unethical front-line employees end up having to jump through the increasing number of hoops. In a true free market system, employees could quit and go to work for another company. But in the US where government regulations often go overboard, affecting all companies, there is less and less opportunity for workers to do this without jumping "out of the frying pan & into the fire." (10/16/22 with major edit **2/1/26**)

Facts and Principles

Be wary of people who are overly subjective, who are ready to re-interpret things based on their feelings opposed to facts and principles. Of course, de-emphasizing feelings can be overdone at times, but I submit generally that this emphasis on principles is one thing that sets us apart from the animals. (1/29/23)

Nothing

Words mean nothing, unless actions reflect them. 8-26-24

End of Chapter - Principle

Psychosis

99% vs 100%
There are a number of people in the population who think they might know what's going on in your mind, with even up to 99% certainty in some cases. These are called normal people. Then there are also a number of people who are 100% sure they know what's going on in your mind. These are the psychotics.

Conscience
Unfortunately, there will always be those in the population with little or no conscience. This is well documented in the scientific literature as a major feature of psychosis. Be careful when interacting with them. They may be the ones Jesus was talking about, when he said "do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces."

Buckshot Theory
Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) was given it's name since it is believed to be on the borderline of psychosis. Some theorists, one of which is Christopher Badcock, indicate that patients with BPD exhibit superior mind-guessing ability since they are extremely attuned to the ever so slight outward social cues of others.

While I agree with Badcock on many things, my theory is that while BPD patients may have this superior ability, their guesses are often wrong, and their mind-guessing suspicions are more like buckshot spray than one bullet hitting the mark. The "buckshot theory" here is that BPD patients suspect a lot of people of a lot of things, so they are bound to be right sometimes due to the sheer volume of their suspicions. Also, buckshot theory could probably be applied to a lot of other issues as well, outside of personality. (circa 2015)

Mouth vs. Conscience
Some people are all mouth and no conscience.

Extreme Assumption
In the past 50 years since I have been paying attention to politics, I have noticed that some politicians are increasingly exhibiting characteristics of psychotic behavior, including extreme assumption. Since it is well documented that certain occupations attract higher percentages of certain personality types, it is a fearful trend for our country. (~2020)

Self-Doubt

I have a theory about psychosis. Many of us have feelings of self-doubt, but some people are so overly socially oriented in their brain wiring, that their brains interpret these feelings as coming from other people. In other words, if they have self-doubt, their minds may reinterpret it to be doubt directed toward them by other people. I think this might also fit with Christopher Badcock's findings regarding the autism-psychosis spectrum. (11-5-20)

Conscience - Types

Some tend to have a guilty conscience. Others, an "I just don't want to get caught" conscience. In a situation where expectations are fair, this latter group are the psychopaths.

Conscience vs. Consequence

A person who doesn't operate under conscience, will operate under consequence. Of course conscience and consequence vary *in* people and *among* people, across time and circumstance.

The Mind of God

The psychotic is absolutely certain he or she knows exactly what is going on in God's mind. And yours.

100%

You can't reliably read what's in someone's mind any more than you can put words in their mouth, although psychotics are sure they can do both of these 100% accurately and 100% of the time.

Imagination vs. Action

The problem is not so much a person who gets angry at someone and then imagines a horrible thing happening to them, as it is the psychotic person who can't stop himself from causing it, or can't bring himself to prevent it.

Nationwide Psychosis

In our U.S. society today, I believe the section of the population that leans toward psychosis, without exhibiting full-blown psychosis, is gaining power. One feature of psychosis is that they don't tend to *second guess* themselves. This lack of self-checking, lack of conscience, leads to poor long-term decision-making but nonetheless exudes a self-confidence, which tends to impress a growing section of the population that believes self-confidence indicates righteousness. This is compounded by the fact that psychosis-leaners are more often aggressive and articulate speakers.

But those with more of a conscience, the *second-guessers*, who are thus losing power today, will eventually reach their own "enough is enough" point after seeing enough evidence, leading them into a higher point of self-confidence. Then we will see more second-guessers find their articulate voice, although some will find it long before others.

However, the question remains as to whether this will happen too late for the country to hold together. If it is too late, then short-term thinking will prevail, and after the short term is over, an economic collapse and loss of freedom will ensue. This is one of my theories on "personality and the fall of civilizations".

The Criminal Mind

For thousands of years, one of the greatest and most frequent uses of self-protective items such as knives, is that a criminal might suspect that his would-be victim may have one. Thus the most frequent use of the item occurs without the item actually being physically used. However, making these items illegal, creates a situation where the law-abiding citizens have no self-protective items, while many criminals continue to acquire them, since crime, after all, is their business.

Consider for a moment, what happens in the mind of a criminal who knows that a law-abiding citizen has no self-protective item? Especially if the criminal is physically much more powerful than the victim? Today, videos of physically weaker people overcoming their larger attackers, abound in fictional media. This creates a dangerous overconfidence in smaller people.

Now consider that technology has allowed the development of a self-protective item that is easier to use for

smaller, weaker people to defend themselves against an attack, even before the attacker gets within arm's length! This would finally be an Equalizer against an age-old problem. Then, consider that some authority aimed to take this Equalizer away from the smaller and weaker people, rendering them once again, more susceptible to attack by the stronger criminal. Women in particular as a group would be disproportionately affected. By today's standard of being disproportionately affected as a group, should this proposed return to caveman times not become a civil rights issue? (2020)

Empathy, Extremes

That's the thing that goes wrong when even empathy goes overboard. You think you know exactly what someone's thinking. But all you know is what you would think if you were them. And alas, you are not them.

Bravery, Doubt

We are often at our best when brave. Bravery is running forward with a strong desire, determination, and commitment to fairness and service, to the self as well as to others, yet not knowing the outcome. So, one of the best things you can do is realize you may *think* you know what the outcome will be in any given situation, while only God knows for certain. In other words, keep a little healthy doubt.

One of the hallmarks of a psychotic is they believe themselves to be 100% right, quite often. You may believe 99% that you are right, and the other 1% may be faith that if you're not right, God will guide you to what is.

Cognitive Dissonance

When someone has two opposing thoughts and feels uncomfortable about it, it's cognitive dissonance. When someone has two opposing thoughts and doesn't feel uncomfortable, or they don't even have a second thought when they should, it could be Illusory Superiority.

Prejudice

I think psychotic-leaners are more likely to be prejudiced. And I think some prejudice may also be tied into a social offender's need to vent or fight against something.

They might also use the tactic of "Safe Target Venting" where the social offender chooses who they believe to be a "weak social person" to verbally attack, who is not likely to argue back, or that won't make them look bad if the conversation is ever found out by a third party, in that case which they could give it a plausible spin. (4/25/22)

End of topic - Psychosis

Rationalizing

Time
We can always say there's plenty of time to do something but that doesn't allow us to break the laws of physics.

Hindsight
Hindsight is useful if done properly, but some take it far outside of reason. Looking back on previous dominoes is useful, but only if not oversimplified, leading to the type of ridiculous rationalization that if you just hadn't got out of bed this morning, none of these problems would have occurred. People of course rarely take it this far, but sometimes they get close enough, just crossing into the land of absurdity. (might put this on substack)

Revenge vs Righteousness
Unfortunately, we sometimes confuse revenge and righteousness. And when we're feeling righteous, we're often the last to know if we're really right.

Self-deception vs. Evidence Perception
Many people lean toward being either rationalizers or fact-believers.
Reality may elude you, but you will not elude reality (except for a while, if you have enough money).

Intuition
When someone unintentionally causes harm, it must be asked, did they ignore any inkling that their actions would cause harm? This ignoring process can be a form of rationalization, depending on the level of actual risk.

Selective Compassion
I work in health care and sometimes see employees who exhibit compassion to patients, but then they must extract back from fellow employees every ounce of energy they gave to the patients, probably to feel whole at the end of the day. It's a point system they use, likely subconsciously, that rationalizes they must get some kind of advantage over another person, because the patient had an advantage over them. I call it Selective Compassion. It is the mark of an insecure person.

Enabling & Motivation
Receiving one small bailout after another creates a personality that says all the right things, but doesn't do them.

The Milgram Study
There was a famous psychological experiment decades ago by Milgram where people obeyed an authority figure who told them to give increasingly stronger electrical shocks to a subject. The subject was really an actor who did not actually receive the shocks, but the study was famous because it revealed that people rationalize bad behavior to degrees they would not believe, if you just told them they would.

Many people should be told about this, because when the rationalizing occurs, the person is unaware of it, and so must maintain a vigilant objectivity for morals especially in unusual situations.

Also, no one can deny that other rationalizing of injustices has happened throughout history. But this experiment shows us that we are not quite as far removed from some degree of alarming rationalization and barbarity as we would like to think.

Extreme Variation
Some people are otherwise very intelligent but seem to have too much variability in their behaviors and thoughts. They are all over the map, from extremely nice to extremely rude, and back and forth between *other*

extreme points as well. There is probably an array of reasons for this, one possibly being an impulsive imagination, and another being the predisposition to rationalize so that the behavior never gets corrected.

When Words Are Useless

If you know someone who is prone to driving carelessly and you calmly present them the statistic that if they continue the tailgating behavior, they are at high risk for injury and death, and they become mad at you for lecturing them, then this response by itself should be an indicator that their mindset is such that there's really nothing you can do about their rationalizing, and they will likely have to discover reality directly on their own. Just remember to avoid getting in the car with them. (9/21/20)

Trend Interpretation

It's one thing to notice trends. It's another thing to notice trends while your emotions are interpreting them, guiding your Trend Perceiver down an illogical path. The numbers don't lie, but we can lie about the numbers. Even to ourselves. (11/7/20)

Bias in Studies

Years ago I took a class called "Experimental Psychology". The emphasis was how to design a psychological study with very little bias. We were shown that there are very subtle and surprising ways bias can occur, often unbeknownst to the experimenter.

I think that a fair study of psychological experimenters as a group themselves, would probably show a general bias in their designs and interpretations, toward certain societal ideals. However, if this study were to be done - a study of psychological experimenters, by psychological experimenters - it would be highly likely to contain a significant level of bias itself. So there we are. (3/4/21)

Disproportionate

One reason for division in some societies is that some people have trouble with proportion, believing the proportionate to be disproportionate, the likely to be unlikely, the important to be unimportant, & all these vice versa as well.

All this disproportionate thinking, I believe, has to do with a gravitational-like emotional pull that bends and warps their sense of facts & reality such that the rationalizer part of the brain kicks in and creates unreasonable "reasons" why this thinking is correct in their minds. The sufferer is more likely to become angry when confronted by math & numbers that prove them wrong. However, if they do happen to be good at math, that rationalizer brain pathway may still dominate in their minds. It will come up with false reasons why that particular math must be ignored. Such is the strength of rationalization over mathematics, in the human mind. (1/28/22)

Good Rationalization

There is also a good side to Rationalization. I have found there is a phenomenon where people can become interested in most any occupation once they start working in it, even if they had a strong dislike for it to begin with. It's like there's a mild "Stockholm Syndrome" type of brain pathway, where your mind copes with the adverse situation by saying and feeling "I might as well love it, I'm going to be here doing it!" Through this mechanism, along with the added ingredient of deep moral principle, I think we are even able to develop a passion for occupations we previously might not have liked at all. (2/9/22)

Automatic

This always amazes me: The talent where some people are able to come up with a way to weave their words, where their rationalization quickly follows. (1/17/24)

Note Idea

Here is a Microsoft Word document of a conversation between me and Grok, for background on a possible note entry about rationalizing, emotion, and types of empathy: predispositions of a person with broader autism phenotype versus the average person:

Rationalizing- Autism v Emotion.docx

6/22/25

The Cost of Mess

For this entry, I'm defining "mess" as some physical accumulation of items such as in a hoarder's house, but also as emotional or other type of mental baggage that would resemble a hoarder's house, if you could only see it.

With regard to mess, some people feel it's a greater pain to *live* with it, while others feel it's a greater pain to *deal* with it. Thus, some of us battle against the second law of thermodynamics, while others surrender to it, although there are all degrees between these extremes. But fortunately this is one of the tendencies we can change, though only to a certain degree depending on our motivation versus the strength of the tendency.

Mess begins for several reasons but some common ones include packrat-ism and procrastination, both of which come under the umbrella of rationalization. We know in the front of our minds that mess has a cost but if the pain of dealing with it is too great, denial (a type of rationalization) takes over.

The cost of mess may take the form of junk areas in a house, where a needed item can't be found because it wasn't placed with similar-use items for easy location, causing the rationalizer to go and buy a duplicate, only to find the original 2 weeks later.

The cost of mess may also take the form of junk areas in the mind, where problems were undealt with and not worked through in detail. Solutions were never built, causing the rationalizer to trip over old pieces and parts occasionally, sometimes resulting in a mental fall.

Unfortunately, my observations in this world have led to the conclusion that due to human nature, quite often the only thing that can break rationalization is consequence. And the severity of that consequence in turn will have to be a level of discomfort required to make it a greater pain to live with the mess than to deal with it. (~late 20-teens, with significant edit **2/2/26**)

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Rationalizers in Concert – A Three Part Note

A Theory:

Before I found Carle Zimmerman's book "Family and Civilization", I had a theory about the rise and fall of civilizations. In fact, I found the book during a search for references to support my theory, which is basically this: As a society becomes more successful, it becomes more overconfident, then correspondingly lax in maintaining its strength, to where it becomes weak and fails.

It's not a new theory but the "overconfident" aspect seems to be rarely talked about – probably due to an overconfidence in many that "Oh, it couldn't be that simple. We would see it if it were."

This is an unfortunate part of human nature in a large number of individuals in all populations. But my question today is this: How can those of us who see this deterioration happening, awaken those who have a blind spot for it?

Behavioral genetics and psychology are the pieces of ground where I choose to start digging for the answer to this anthropological question. I suspect the answer might be in studying the minds of people who are extreme *rationalizers*, because when I look at the fall of civilizations, I think "How could they not see that coming?"

Power vs. Compassion:

One thing I suspect is that maybe during the thousands of years of human pre-history, there were people in tribes who were abusive to their own people in the same tribes, which caused a split in the population between

those who believed in more *power* for themselves, vs. those who believed progress could continue using *compassion* for others. This might be described as the "power-trippers" vs. the "compassion-trippers."

I suspect that when *isolated* from other tribes, those tribes with more power-trippers eventually killed off their own population by reducing trustworthiness & cooperation to zero. So "power-tripper" *total dominant* brain wiring genes were not passed along through group-selection.

Likewise, tribes with more compassion-trippers were likely taken over by roaming *un-isolated* power-tripper dominant tribes, and after mating, resulted in a population that contained *both* brain-wiring genes, expressed more to one side or the other in various individuals, as genetics normally does. It looks like this is what has happened through the ages, resulting in what we see now: a number of power-trippers and a number of compassion-trippers in all populations, although the proportions likely differ.

But what about the elusive ideal of an *isolated* compassion-tripper tribe? "If we could just be like that," many people say. Carried to an extreme, this would zero-out a population as well, because all the food would be given away to anyone who appeared less fortunate. Essentially, the hunter-gatherers would give away all their food until they became too weak to hunt & gather. But this situation is moot anyway, since power-trippers have already roamed and conquered and passed their genes into populations the world over.

So populations today contain both tendencies. Bottom line, I think the balance between power-trippers & compassion-trippers constitutes a built-in limitation on self-destruction either way, which ensures the survival of a maximum number of people in the population.

Should we attempt to change this balance? Unfortunately now, humans have developed the ability to destroy all human life on earth. Behavioral genetics will change over great lengths of time, and only through numerous civilizational successes and failures. But in the mean time, efforts toward clarifying psychological vision could promote less volatility in the rises and falls of civilizations.

How does Rationalization fit into all this? Rationalizing is attempting to make the irrational rational. The mindsets of the power-trippers and compassion trippers each rely on evidence to support their positions. It's widely known that 2 people can witness an event and later tell somewhat different accounts of what they saw. Some of this is perception, but my theory is that a good chunk of it is rationalization, whether conscious or subconscious.

And it's widely known that some people are brain-wired to be more natural rationalizers than others. But it's harder to rationalize something in the face of solid, undeniable evidence. So each side, the power-trippers and the compassion-trippers, need to have their verified, convincing *evidence* of why their mindset is the correct one, in order to convince any fence sitters in the middle to come on over to their side and form a majority.

Evidence vs. Rationalization:

Audio and video were great advances in providing undeniable evidence, until just recently as a.i. has made them much easier to fake. So with regard to the average person verifying evidence, we've been sent back to times before audio & video were even invented.

But a.i. along with hacking has also made it easy to fake or delete large numbers of *documents* online, even possibly re-writing history in conjunction with electronic "book burning". By becoming so dependent on a.i. and hackable systems, we have ironically, in the name of human advancement, shot ourselves in the foot.

I strongly suspect that because of this, old books and pictures will become much more valuable, as long as forensics can continue to spot any fakes. Otherwise, the human race could very well could be led back into the 1700's at least on the subject of history verification, or evidence verification. Although in the 1700's, people trusted signed documents to some degree, and we would likely not go back to that method of evidence verification. We might develop a new respect for our elderly, and their ability to recall things that happened 70 years ago. But of course this would add back a lot of subjectivity that we strove so long to eliminate with audio and video.

The resurgence of subjectivity in evidence verification likely means that there will be a resurgence in rationalization as well, unfortunately. But those civilizations that strive to minimize rationalization and subjectivity by whatever means possible will likely hold the advantage. This would in turn require that a larger percentage of the population not be overly emotional thinkers, nor let their imaginations run wild. They would need to be innovative, working on trustworthy systems of information. It would therefore be an interesting psychological study to see what personality and other brain characteristics prevalent in a population allows that

population to advance in the face of increasingly untrustworthy sources of information.
(12/21/25 with significant edit **2/3/26**)

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End of Topic: Rationalizing

Selfishness

Blame
The fingers often conveniently get pointed at the person who's not there.

Double Agents
There are those who give, and there are those who take. But perhaps most deceptive are those who give, and then take. This is one example of selective compassion.

Passion
If you invest your passion in one thing, it may be lacking in another. Make sure it is lacking in the wrong thing.

Also, it is one thing to have a passion for changing a future in which you will live; it's another thing to have a passion for changing a future in which you will not. Of course, both of these passions could be either selfish or selfless.

Depression
There are myriad and even opposing reasons for depression. But I think in some people, it may be because they have not made enough meaningful sacrifice. Fortunately, a great relieving sacrifice one can do anytime is to give up the idea of the self, to God.

Appearance of Superiority
A person who tries to make himself look superior, diminishes the importance of his own words in the minds of his listeners. And this is likely unbeknownst to him. So practice being hyper-aware of whether you are trying to look superior.

Mix
We can say "God bless you" with a mix of selflessness and selfishness, where part of what we're doing is wanting to be seen as righteous. Or, we can do it with only selflessness.

False Humility
There is a special kind of selfishness that comes when we think we are humble. Before saying anything, check your selfishness meter.

When a Win-Lose is a Win-Win
Some people's priority is to feel a righteous victory. They can't feel a righteous victory when everyone's in agreement, so they create a disagreement. If they lose the argument, they can feel a self-pity "righteous victory" as a put-upon, unfairly treated, wrist-to-forehead victim. If they win the argument, then righteous indignation has easily found its proper place. So whichever way the argument goes, they have a way to Win the Righteous Victory. Gotta hand it to them, they have figured out a way to never lose this battle (at least in their own minds).

The Art of Condescension
We might hold the general opinion that someone is inferior to us, that they don't really know what they are doing, or we may believe they are arrogant, or that their time is less valuable than our time. And if we are selfish, we might choose to disrespect them in some very clever ways. For example, we might offer to help them with something that an average adult should not need help with. Or we might tell them to stop lecturing, or

tell them they are going to have their way regardless. Or we might ask them to help us especially when they are obviously busy doing something else. And on and on.

Infringement
How do you tell if your actions are selfish? Usually, if you are infringing on the rights of others, or even infringing on common courtesy. In principle though, if you infringe on someone's rights, he might have the right to infringe on yours. The government is supposed to be the fair arbiter in these things, but when the government is the infringer, the principle still holds true. However, this should all be considered not hastily, but instead, light of history.

Fine Line
Lord, when I consider my own plans, please help me to discern the sometimes fine differences between the selfish and the selfless.

80/20
One variation on the 80/20 rule is that there are people who are the 20% Tryers, who make just enough effort where they can say they tried.

Inspiration
"I want to be thought of as…" is not always a selfish sentiment when the thought of you inspires someone to do good.

Speed vs. Accuracy
It takes many kinds of people to make the world run. God has planned that some will emphasize speed and some emphasize accuracy, so that when either need arises, there will generally be some who are best suited to perform the task. These two groups may differ with each other on how to handle the task, and if selfish, they may fail to see that both are there for contingency and should strive to take the larger view that the best fit for the situation should be used at the time. So the key element seems to be getting rid of the selfishness first.

Other People's Jobs
The respect I have for people in their jobs is not based on the money they make. Rather, it is based on how selfless they are, no matter how much money they make.

Also I have noticed that complainers tend to think other people's jobs are simple and can't understand why certain things just can't be done. This of course is small picture thinking.

Realization of this went to a new level when I was working as a dietitian in a nursing home. Families sometimes did not understand why an employee could not just srop what she was doing and make a cheese sandwich at any given moment. In reality, our staffing was budgeted by corporate, to function at bare minimum capacity and staff were always very busy trying not to fall behind, no matter what part of the shift we were in.

Ironically, if one of the corporate folks (or administrator) heard about this type of family request, they would always tell us to stop what we were doing and fix the sandwich. Fortunately these situations didn't happen often but if word had gotten out among the families that we *did* prepare items to order at any time, everyone's meals would have always been late, and the higher ups would not have taken any responsibility for it.

Fantasy
Fancying yourself as this or that, sneaks up on you, and it eventually ends badly. Also, fantasizing about getting appreciation from others is a foray into futility, a fruitless and time-wasting endeavor that only pushes you further away from reality as well as from actually receiving any appreciation.

Impulsivity
"What the hell, might as well" - This statement should always be a red flag that something bad is about to happen.

Better with Age
The older I get, the easier it is to tell when the heart suddenly has a selfish feeling, where in previous years, it was more difficult to tell if the feeling was indeed selfish. However, as I have seen from working with the elderly, often there is a point of diminishing capacity to self-monitor, as the brain ages beyond a certain point.

Effort Varies
There is thankful happiness, and there is selfish happiness.
Selfish feelings occur in everyone's minds. It's whether we lavish in them or shun them that says who we are.

Talent, Selfishness
On the one hand, realizing in your head that you have a talent, and on the other hand feeling superior in your heart because you have a talent, are two different things that sometimes happen together, but should be separated so it can be seen what's going on. In short, it's ok to know you have a talent, not ok to feel superior because of it.

Also, it's ok for your heart to feel that your major objective is compassion to help others by using your talent.

The Other Way Around
One act of selfishness is to think that God created the environment just to fit *us*, when actually we were made just to fit *it*. Or, that God made the world so it would please *us*, when actually He made us with such brain wiring that we could be pleased with *it*.

Pretense
Dropping all pretense is such a mental relief whenever I can manage to do it. It is a testament to inborn selfish tendency that this is a hard thing to get around to.

The Id
Regarding things that irritate the id: You will just have to let go of these things, just like you will have to let go of the human body after a number of years. But preferably the former, far in advance of the latter, so you can help people better while you're here.

Prayer
I don't always tell people when I'm praying for them or for other people, unless I think it might be comforting for them to know it. I think telling people *when* you are going to pray can be overdone, and sometimes this can edge a little bit over into the land of selfishness. It reminds me of when Jesus talked about praying in private (Matthew 6:5-6).

Extremes
You can even have too much of a sense of self, if it removes your sense of connection to others.

WW2
The WW2 generation was more polite and courageous. Today people are more rude and chicken.

Clues
We must constantly analyze information in our environment to look for clues that we are being selfish in any way. Sometimes it is as simple as picking up on someone's response to you in their subtle tone or behavior; sometimes it is memory of morals and norms; sometimes it is just that subtle feeling that something's not quite right. (~mid 20-teens)

Selfishness Defined
One way that a psychological survey of changing attitudes could determine a societal definition of selfishness would be to include the same questions every year, such as, "Do you feel it is selfish for someone to play their car stereo loud enough for you to hear it in your car?" and "How many times in the past year have you noticed

this happening?"
In this survey, if there's any question about bias in the questions, consider that now there's an app (called Halo) that can tell you if your tone is rude. But based on whose standard? (August, 2020)

Prior Domino

In addition to being a high guilt-feeler, I introspected today that in face to face conversations, I have an emotional heart-tendency to become overconfident at times and exhibit some spontaneously selfish speech and behavior.

The selfish little devil on my left shoulder gives me an inkling that I'm more special than the average person and causes me to blurt out selfish stuff often before I'm aware of it, which then causes the internal judge to say "Ok then we need a stiff dose of some heavy guilt to stop this." So it seems I've rediscovered the domino before Guilt - Selfishness. But now the focus and practice and work should be on detecting the point this feeling comes up, before anything comes out of my mouth. (11/8/20)

Appreciation: Deserved vs. Undeserved

You can go out looking for trouble in order to root it out and get rid of it, or you can go out looking for trouble, exacerbate trouble, or invent trouble, to get rid of it so you can look like the savior. (November, 2020)

Expectation, Selfishness, Assumption

It's important to keep the mindset that it is "God Only" who allows you to do good things, but just as important, as a part of this, that things can turn on a dime, and fail, especially if you come to assume that He will continue to use you as He has previously. This expectation is a type of selfishness, that thinks it knows more of the will of God than it really does.

Guard Against Selfishness

We automatically deceive ourselves into thinking that letting our guard down for a little while is ok, when it comes to guarding against selfishness. The feeling that it is ok to let your guard down a little, is really a big mistake. The Hessians learned this after their Christmas holiday in Trenton, in 1776. (3/15/21)

Bombshell Popularity

We have become so selfishly enamored with bombshell stories that we neglect the "death by a thousand cuts" stories, and especially the "almost dead at 800 cuts" stories which could help us the most, if we would only pay attention. An example is when people are gradually spoiled by receiving more items than they earn. Eventually there is a point of no return. (8/27/22)

Moral Decline

There is the hidden economic cost of dishonesty where repair shops will charge for un-needed repair, or the cost of not caring, when items are made to lower quality. These are but two examples of moral decline – in dollars. (12/11/22)

Brain and Spirit

Upon cogitation today, the following abstract constructs appear clearer and more concrete. Many of us have a basic self-righteousness that can increase into *anger* if things don't go our way. And some of us simultaneously have an opposing self-righteousness that seeks to *limit that anger* by imposing a punishment on the self, which can be as mild as guilt, or harsh as self-sabotage. This second type of self-righteousness feeds a humility mechanism. But it is still fueled by self-righteousness and can be destructive as it often gets out of hand.

The act of letting God into your heart to have dominion over these two, over any type of self-righteousness, should feel like the overwhelming presence of a strong leader who comes in and stops the bickering in the room.

Since I tend to think in terms of analogies, I recalled a futuristic movie where the authorities had these small robot drones that would occasionally go into peoples' homes and analyze them for any signs of misbehavior. People could be doing anything, such as arguing, making love, or any daily activity, and out of respect for the

power of what could befall them, they would stop the activity immediately and hold still, so the drone could analyze them.

This is no perfect analogy, but it speaks to the respect for superior power. Naturally then, the question becomes “What does God want me to do?” He does not always answer in words. Sometimes, like at the end of a different movie (“The Grey”), he simply causes us to act.

So if you sabotage yourself, it is a sign you may have insidiously and slowly turned away from respecting the power of God, and you need to drop all pretense and ask Him what you should do. (1/1/23)

Wink & Nod

Sometimes there needs only to be some “wink-and-nod” cooperation for widespread corruption to occur. No worded messaging necessary. Many already know what they’re supposed to do. (2/2/23)

Now Uncommon

Is it just me or does it appear that more people are parking in the back of parking lots, to avoid having their cars dinged up by selfish people opening their car doors without using common courtesy? It makes me wonder if “common courtesy” is becoming an oxymoron. 5-18-24

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They Want You Dependent

The powerful need you dependent on them. It makes them more powerful. The more powerful they are, the more they can command situations that bring them more money. But watching them for decades now, it appears their dopamine is just as important to them as their money, if not more.

Ways they make the independent dependent:

Repeating lies so often that people come to believe them (“gaslighting”).
Appealing to people’s short term thought such as greed, by using handouts & lowering performance standards now, regardless of the long-term costs.
Appealing to laziness by structuring these handouts so that there is little or no need for physical and/or mental work in those who are capable of this work.
Appealing to people’s emotional thought by exaggerating any suffering that may occur.
Appealing to people’s emotional thought by exaggerating or fabricating oppression by others.
Appealing to those with a more selfish nature, who are less altruistic.
Promoting “divide and conquer” by exaggerating any hate between various groups.
Paralyzing people’s options by increasing regulations beyond reason.
Deceiving by disproportionate news reporting.
Redefining words & concepts to weaken any cohesion in the opposition, especially legal concepts such as the word “reasonable”.

Watch out for these and more.

(2024)

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A Good Question for A.I.

Certain mindsets often include a high proportion of these: the psychological concept of "splitting"; increased emotionality; decreased impulse control; short-term thought; immediate gratification. What types of brain

imaging or chemistry would be common to all of these, and what type of category might this person belong to? (2025)

The Polite Way to Say It
Most often when you think "I'm just gonna throw caution to the wind", it's you who ends up getting thrown into the wind.
4/29/25

Even More Clever Selfishness
There are people out there who would rather let someone get hurt, than for it to be revealed that a perfectly good solution was not their idea. This is probably because their self-worth is bound up in whether an idea was theirs or not. This is a matter of emotional immaturity and insecurity, regardless of IQ. (May 2021 with major edit **11/26/25**)

Positional
Some are more concerned with their positions than with the resources required to maintain their positions. (12/12/25)

Blame Shifters
In conversation, some people use the word “blame” interchangeably with “responsibility”. To me, the difference is that a “blamer” expresses an implied finger-pointing selfishness that seeks to remove the spotlight of responsibility from himself regardless of where it may actually shine, and sometimes to the point where he “may protest too much” and look guilty. A simple “responsibility placer” would instead calmly present the facts in a humble way, as if explaining a mathematical equation.

I think most people pick up on this difference, even if only subconsciously. So when people talk about “where the responsibility lies”, they should not substitute the term “where the blame lies”. Otherwise they might be perceived as a “blame shifter.” (2/4/26)

The One
Some people are prone to automatically latch onto the one explanation that takes the blame off of themselves, and refuse to hear any reasons for that explanation being bogus. Then their refusal to deal with any opposing reasoning makes it appear they are more likely to be guilty. (2/4/26)

When Selfishness Slips In
The mind is an interesting thing. It can believe you are doing one thing while really you are doing another. For example, no one thinks they are being selfish while in the middle of the act itself, but we all do it to some degree at various times.

You might hear advice like this: “If you’re going to do something good, don’t do it just to outshine someone else, or to feel good about yourself. Instead, change your mindset to doing the action without any expectation of any personal gain. Likewise, we must all make some comparisons in daily life, just to get through it. But don’t make them with any expectation or assumption that you are better than someone else.”

“OK” you might say, “I’ll catch myself before I do anything like that.” But the truth is, we don’t always catch ourselves, and we sometimes slip into selfishness unaware. In our minds, we don’t hear or see the words “I’m better at this than anyone else!” Instead, it’s a subtle sort of “proud of yourself” feeling as opposed to what it should be, which is a “Thank the Lord” feeling. So you have to learn to be on the lookout for that subtle self-pride feeling, and see it as a not-so-subtle red flag. (12/16/25 with major edit **2/8/26)**

End of Topic “Selfishness”

Service

Do vs. Say
Commit Service. (12/26/20)

Be Impulsive
Be impulsive – when it comes to helping those who truly cannot help themselves and who also need the help at that very second. Emergency Medical Technicians must have the impulse to act quickly, along with their skills. But in other types of situations where there is time to think a bit first, be wary that your help does not enable or deepen any unnecessary dependence. Otherwise, it is not really help. (Substack 9/23/23)

Relief
One of the most relieving types of freedom to attain is that of giving up your concern of whether you will be remembered favorably by other people, grieving for the loss of this concern and letting it go, so that you are free to act on your morals without any regard to being remembered favorably, or without any regard to whether any act of kindness you do will be ever known by any person. (Substack 9/3/23)

Anonymous
'Tis a glorious thing to be happy with making some contribution, remembered or not, instead of longing to be remembered.
If it ever comes down to a choice, it is better for your actions to be known as good and right by God, than by your fellow human beings.

Give Up
Give up the sense that God will reward you for your righteous acts. Instead, just know that (1) you Hope your effort ends up being a righteous act in the first place, (2) God has Determined your reward, which may be totally unknown to you, (3) Heaven is not a reward for any act except the act of Believing Jesus has saved you; and (4) Focus all your effort on being thankful for number 3.

Reasoning for Motivation
One analogy for doing good works is that after Jesus has run with the baton and handed it off to us, we should not stop and say, "If he will not run any further then neither will I". Instead, we should take the baton and run with it, as He intended.

Your Job
In your job, go carefully, respectfully, solemnly, pleasantly, and take care of the details, in order to help others. Someone's got to do it.

Types of Service
Two of the good and right things we should do are: (1) Giving people the kind of help they really need, not to foster dependence, and (2) Protecting the innocent.

Encouragement

Encourage, but do not judge the person's response to your encouragement. Also realize that the more you encourage, the more you could be rejected. But also know that God may have some unforeseen plan for that person, outside his/her knowledge, and outside your knowledge.

Encouragees: Likewise, do not assign 100% judgment to the encourager, who may actually be right about you. Like I tell my kids, it's good to try and guess what's in someone's mind, but it's bad to think you know what's in someone's mind. (2007)

Expecting a Reward

The essence of real giving is not expecting anything in return of course, but I may add not even expecting a good feeling from doing it. It is more likely you will receive that good feeling when you don't expect it, but that is not your motivation.

Receiving appreciation for your service is, of course, unimportant compared to Giving your service. A true heart of Service does not do it for even God's appreciation. Instead, God's appreciation is the unexpected pleasure you may receive after the Service has been rendered.

Winning and Serving

Some may say "It's about winning, and if you happen to serve along the way, that's fine." I say, it's the other way around.

Passion for Service

Sometimes you just want to run out and be aggressive about something, burning up a lot of pent-up adrenaline. In good people, this is constructive as opposed to destructive. Commit service with the white-hot blistering passion of God Almighty!

Intrusive

One of life's fine lines is being helpful without being intrusive.

Oxytocin

God sends a good feeling to your mind when you help others. He invented that oxytocin pathway for a reason.

Happiness

One key to happiness is to gratefully accept God's plan, feast or famine, and strive to do good things within it, with a servant's heart.

Altruism

If your prayers for others can light up your altruism gene like a Christmas tree light, then that is one way God sends you a feeling of great relief.

Endearing

Have a passion for endearing yourself to others by sacrifice to them, not to receive their appreciation in return, but just so they will have a dear gift. So, don't overthink it.

Just remember it is a fine line balance: Don't oversimplify by thinking "More sacrifice is always better." Instead, save certain amounts of yourself and your resources so that you can serve through the long run.

However, knowing these amounts is difficult and as a human being, you will do it imperfectly. In this process, turn your focus back to thankfulness for being forgiven by God for your imperfections, while simultaneously moving forward in your service. (2/6/26)

Hands Dirty

My Dad, and I suspect that many in his generation also, used to say "You can't be afraid to get your hands dirty," meaning both literally and figuratively, when performing a good service.

Of course, performing a good service does not *require* you to get your hands dirty, but you shouldn't be afraid to do it if necessary. To the degree which you can keep in the forefront of your mind that you are serving, you are here to serve, and even sacrifice, then all of your decisions will be proper and follow easily and naturally.

Lord I am deserving of your plan, feast or famine or in-between. The head must help the heart to feel that it can't be afraid to get its hands dirty if it wants to serve others. (2/6/26)

Level of Realization

A fact is the same fact whether someone has a deep, dim, or no realization of it.

I have focused on the virtue of service. But just as soon as I think I am improving, I find there is a much higher level it can be taken to.

(See also in this document "Depth of Realization".)

Overthinking

I have to remind myself to not overthink service, just do it. It's like sports. If you think too much about it with the logical, micromanaging mindset mechanism, it spoils the process, by causing you to be concerned about yourself in relation to the service. This concern may cause an overconfidence or an underconfidence.

This thought reminded me of a quote by Gandhi, "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."

But of course, anything a human being does can be overdone or underdone, even the concept of "Don't overthink it." I was once expressing one of my concerns to a supervisor, who replied, "Yes, but don't overthink it." I introspected on that for a while afterwards. Then the inescapable conclusion came to me that she just wanted me to follow existing policy and not come up with any new ideas that might complicate her job. Whether I was correct, I'll never know 100% for sure, but I give it about a 90%.

Freedom of Choice vs. Submission by Force

What have I left to give at this late point in my life? It didn't turn out according to all my early great expectations, and now appears there will be no famous contributions. But most people are not famous, and God has designed it this way. So it is better to keep contributing in everyday service, and see that value and fame are not always the same. Each individual tree does not ask for fame but collectively and quietly they create oxygen for the world. Ordinary service is on value par with famous service. Also, we need good followers, because when there are too many leaders, the group goes no-where. Remember the principle of the ant hill.

Now, having said this, I realize that a certain political movement has recently co-opted the word "collective" and even claim they represent the concept of "the people working together." My comment above is not a political statement, but I will say that this certain movement appears to be ok with *forcing* individuals to "work together" by law, in a "collective" they might not agree with. Instead, I believe the individual should be free to decide who to follow, and which collective they prefer to work with. History should be our guide into human nature, which we must deal with, whether we like it or not.

Productive vs. Unproductive service

Most of us have a built-in passion to help others. But what is help? The definition changes over the years. Certainly if a starving person came to us, we would say it is helpful to give them a fish. But experience over time teaches many of us that continuing to give them the fish every day, without teaching them to fish, becomes less helpful, and starts to injure their will to work.

Some of us say we know this, yet are conflicted and don't practice it. As well, we also learn over the years that some sacrifices are more productive than others. The wheelchair could be pushed *for* the patient the rest of his life. Or the physical therapist could help the patient learn to push his own wheelchair, or to start walking again, even though there might be some pain with using those muscles again. Which is most productive?

The definitions of "help" and "service" need to be reviewed from time to time.

No Self-Sabotage

Don't put yourself in a hard place unnecessarily when trying to help someone, but don't shy away from the hard

place either, if it becomes necessary in the process of helping someone. Your heart might feel that adding some self-sabotage to the situation makes the helped person feel better about their situation, and/or makes you humble so you don't gloat, but in reality it only limits your help. The heart must learn a slightly different definition of fairness, which does not include self-sabotage, but instead includes the effort to give the credit to God, even though your effort will not be perfect.

Ruinous Compassion
Some people refuse to learn the difference between helpful giving and harmful giving.

Overthinking
If you find to your pleasant surprise that you finished doing something good and right, and there appears to be no errors, then don't overthink on it. Just bounce off and head right into the next thing. This is why being in the habit of instantly giving the glory to God, helps you increase both speed and accuracy.

Passion, Fairness, Guilt, Selfishness
Be helpful, not by lowering the self to less than others, but instead by using the self in concert with others. Shame and guilt do work for keeping the self humble, but if overdone, they limit the help a person can give. A more effective and mature approach is to submit to God, but with a passion.

If there is no passion, let this be a red flag because it is no small thing and indicates the heart is not in it, and may slip back into using shame and guilt before it is realized. Bring the heart on board with passion, by calling up one of its inborn desires: Fairness and helping others.

We are born with the desire to help, but not always knowing exactly how. One way how is not to limit the help you can give. Submitting to God means submitting for what He has for us to do, which are good and right things as told to us in His instruction book. We will not do these things perfectly, but God's plan is for us to put forth effort anyway, knowing we will learn from problems along the way. Doing good things includes thoughts as well. When selfishness creeps in, ask yourself, "Is this thought helpful?"

Go, then Go
Go out and help people. But remember, don't linger needlessly. After your service, sometimes the most helpful thing is to remove yourself so the person doesn't feel like they must continue to pay attention to you.

Accommodate
Accommodate the customer. Focus on being increasingly accommodating.

Santa
When I start dreading going to work on a day that I'm usually off, I try to remember about 5 years ago I worked on Christmas day and the feeling of helping people on that day was enormously good. I kind of felt like Santa Claus. It's all in how you look at it. (2018)

Innovate
In your job, you generally must adopt the working mindset of the managers over you at first, except when it contradicts your morals. Once you are settled into this, you may very gradually start innovating, as long as it is something your boss would smile upon, unless you are ok with going elsewhere.

Meetings
One silver lining to covid19 - it's a slap in the face to company managers who like to schedule all these unnecessary meetings. (April, 2020)

The Pool
If you feel a little dread about going to work, see it as a red flag. Instead, shift your perspective to this heart language: Be ready to go; humbly, rightfully, helpfully, bravely. Feel it as if jumping into a cold swimming pool, knowing, as we used to say as kids, "You'll get used to it."

Reputation
A good reputation spreads like a glacier, while a bad reputation spreads like a wildfire. And in some jobs more than others, you have to earn your reputation every day from a clean slate.

The "How" Matters
The rewards of your labor: You can have it but you shouldn't flaunt it.

High Dirt
If you're ok with getting your hands dirty in work, be careful not to see yourself as superior to those who don't get theirs dirty.

Who's Watching
When considering whether to help people, sometimes I wonder if it's because I have an inborn desire to help, or because I want to be appreciated. The answer lies in this question: Would I do this thing even if never appreciated for it by another human being? Fortunately, often the answer is yes.

Bad Gift
If you really want to help others, don't give them another irritating person to have to deal with. Focus on not being that.

Messages in a Bottle
Overall, what I am doing in this document here is writing code for the software in my mind, but with strong hopes that others may benefit from it as well. In fact, I think I might not be typing this if it weren't for those hopes.

Obligation
One component of a good relationship is the difference between "I will serve this person as long as it is my obligation" and "I will serve this person".

Tools & Effort
These advantages I see in my life - they are not advantages, but tools laid before me, to help people. Our physical success or failure may be determined by how we try to use these tools. In other words, the amount and type of Effort we put forth.

Your body and thoughts are like tools - if you take good care of them and keep them organized, they will serve you well and you can serve others well with them.

Genuineness vs. Deception
Do you desire to be a good helper or to be *seen* as a good helper? Don't fool yourself. Some people can pick up on your subtle clues of genuineness, or lack thereof. And some people are fooled by good actors, for there are many Oscar level actors out there who are not in the entertainment business.

Morality
Could one definition of morality be: Reducing as much human suffering as possible? (6/17/22)

Beyond Prevention
Greater focus should be placed on preventing deterioration in many aspects, including physical health, interpersonal relationships, etc.. In the process of preventing deterioration, you may actually build things stronger at times. (6/19/22)

Driving and More
Even my sons in their 20's now agree that people are driving more like maniacs than 5 years ago. Increasingly I

am one of those who keep their distance on the road, so people are constantly cutting in front of me. However, if it wasn't for us distance-keepers, the tailgaters would not be able to do their "may I cut in" dances. And there would also be a lot more wrecks. On a grander scale it seems clearer that those who sacrifice their space are increasingly the ones on whose backs the rest of society rides roughshod, as well as being the ones who these oblivious riders owe much of their increased productivity, should they arrive a few seconds earlier to their destinations. This concept likely applies not only to driving but to countless other types of situations as well. (11/9/22)

Spiritual Hearing

Over the years I have become more aware of this feeling which used to be identified as "Something's not quite right" but now I know it happens when my emotional Heart *id* feels "lucky" or "privileged" or "things are going my way because I deserve it", quickly followed by the emotional Heart *superego* saying, "No, I'm going to bring you down a notch".

Spiritually, this is a sign that I'm hogging God's glory, and my spirit is getting clogged up with it. However, I know enough now to automatically shift into "help others with everything I've got" mode, releasing that glory energy into service, which then shunts it up to God where it belongs. This is one of those things I have learned is "no small matter", even though the feeling is not intense. I have learned to turn up my spiritual hearing aides so that the feeling will be amplified to the appropriate degree. (10/15/23)

The Big Head

When we start thinking that we are too valuable to be serving in the situations we find ourselves in, we should remember:

We were not meant for things *greater than* this; we were meant for things *such as* this. (11/7/23) (Substack 11/20/23)

Proactive

Not only be ready to help others, but when there appear to be no opportunities at hand, proactively seek them out. (11/27/23)

Two Motivators

Since Jesus' paying that horrible price for our admission to the perfect place saved us, we with consciences feel a desire to make effort, although imperfect, to do good and right things. We may be repulsed by how grotesque and negative our self-absorption is, and that is one motivator. But we should also strive to focus on the positive and clean God-fulfilment motivator of serving and being of assistance to others. This striving to be motivated by the positive, is part of the effort we desire to make. (11/28/23)

Get Fitted

Mahatma Gandhi said "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others." This caused me to think: The self that gets lost is not the self you wanted anyway. It needed to be let go of, like one of the previous selves that made you cry when you didn't get the toy you wanted, when you wanted it. The self that is found, will replace the old one just fine. And the new one will be a better fit. (12/26/23)

Spoiled

To help someone without spoiling them is sometimes like groping for a doorknob in a dark, unfamiliar room. (12/28/23)

Time

There's a proper way to do most anything. It often involves taking more time to do it.

Serving After You Leave

One form of altruism or philanthropy could be like the author who continues to write, knowing that in this life he will have little or no readership, while continuing to hope that his writings will somehow endure and help

others in the future. (3/23/24)

Dopamine, Again

Is it selfish to desire to help someone? It depends on how it's done. Intention matters. The dopamine system was put there to give us a mental reward for acting. But I believe dopamine needs to be coupled with oxytocin to ensure that the act is coupled with a genuine concern for others, so that the help is not given just to feel some kind of self-glorification rush.

The Old, Run-Down Church

Around age 9, I recall sitting in the pew with my parents in a large, very ornate church where many of the members were doctors, lawyers, and well-paid business people. On the back of the program, I drew a picture of a large church with no cars in the parking lot, and next to that, I drew a small beat-up church building with many cars in the parking lot. At that early age, I felt there was something not quite right about the difference between the haves and the have nots, especially in light of what I was hearing from the pulpit, where Jesus said go and sell all your possessions and give the proceeds to the poor.

Through the years, I've heard various explanations about the "sell all your possessions" verses. The meaning that comes through to me is that (a) we should use our possessions to help those less fortunate. But if we don't, then the right thing to do is (b) sell them all and give the money to the less fortunate. Of course in both situations, possessions & money need to be used for real help, not for gaining favor or throwing so-called help in a direction where it will be misused, such as giving money to a drug addict. (5/21/24)

How Ya Feelin'?

I worked in a nursing home in the early 1990's. There was this little old lady with mild dementia named Loretta who was always walking through the halls, in a generally pleasant mood. Her immediate greeting was always "How ya feeling?" I had not thought about this in over 30 years. But then a few days ago I thought I recalled that maybe my Dad's Dad used that as a greeting also. I didn't get to see him much so I thought maybe I was conflating the two memories, but the same type of intuition that served so well on tests in nursing school tells me that it was indeed two unconflated memories.

I asked AI if there was any evidence of "How are you feeling?" being a more common greeting in previous decades. AI did not any find evidence, but stated that after World War 2, there seemed to be a deeper concern for the welfare of others, so it might be a valid assumption that it could have been a more common greeting.

This fits with my long-held theory that during and after World War 2, most people in the US put aside their differences and pulled together for a longer time like they have not since, except briefly after disasters such as tornadoes, floods, and 9/11/01.

3-18-25

Default

When you run out of things to think, get in the habit of letting the next default thought be "What can I do to help here?" 3-19-25

Best Sometimes

Sometimes the only way or best way to help someone is with simple empathy. 4-17-25

Reasons

Do you serve others because of empathy or because of thanks to God, or both?

Old & Young Altruism

Altruists do what they believe is right. But there are different motivations for doing right, at different times. In my 30's with a new family, I was full of hormones & willing if necessary to throw myself into a dangerous situation to protect them.

But as I get older, hormones are gradually replaced with the knowledge that I've received many blessings over the decades. Those accumulated blessings carry such a great weight that there's an increasing desire to

counterbalance them with service, including altruism as needed.

So the desire to be altruistic is there just the same, although body chemistry and experience have changed the motivations somewhat.

10/25/25

In Most People

Thankfulness engenders a form of altruism. 10.26.25

Merit

In most jobs, merit is based on Relevant Brain Function (RBF). Or at least it should be. (1/6/26)

End of topic: Service

TRUST & TRUSTWORTHINESS

Forgiveness vs. Trust
To forgive doesn't mean you always trust.

Words and Actions
Words can easily lie. And it is sometimes thought that actions cannot lie. However, actions can be deceptive, although it is more difficult. Recall the story of the Trojan horse. Look for signs of trustworthiness in people, in what they do, more than in what they say. And look to see if what they do, matches what they say.

Disrespect
Moral Decay can be placed under the ever-widening umbrella of disrespect. It decreases good trustworthiness. And it increases bad trustworthiness, where people can be trusted to do the wrong thing, over and over.

Communication
Words about the physical world can be trusted only if backed up by physical reality. For example, if someone says "Most people think this" then there needs to be a survey indicating this is true.

Trust & Love
There appears to be a process whereby if someone you love and trust, then loves and trusts a third person also, then you may begin to feel you can love and trust that third person too, although it is gradual.

Bad Assumption
The Bible says love and forgive your enemies. It does not say trust your enemies. Nor does it say to stand by and allow your enemies to hurt the innocent. People make the bad assumption that forgiveness means trust and submit.

Forgiveness
Forgiving someone does not remove their responsibility for the offense, especially an unlawful offense, and especially if the offender can be helped by learning somehow to respect others. Don't confuse forgiveness with removing responsibility.

Intention vs. Capability
We can often trust one another's intentions, but as human beings, we can less often trust one another's capabilities.

Discerning Trustworthiness
Most people are good people. But you never know if the one sitting next to you is one of those.

Deception, Law, Culture
Some cultures more than others have laws which were developed over centuries based on trust and trustworthiness. However, if a "high trustworthy" population becomes increasingly untrustworthy for whatever reason, that system of laws will crumble. It's like running gasoline through a diesel engine - it may run for a short while until it's permanently damaged and then will suddenly quit.

Short fuse
When you put your trust in someone who is volatile or flammable, and they suddenly change, you might no longer be able to trust them regarding any number of things, because of their unpredictability. I have seen many people who seem normal for a long time, then in a stressful situation they suddenly reveal how short their fuse

is. I also suspect a genetic component in this. And I would bet that one day soon there will be a genetic test for it.

Decision-making
Often, decision-making on what action to take, is clear cut. But when it's not, don't get mired down in micromanagement. Just trust God and move forward on intuition. This is one example of "The Speed of Trust" (which is also the title of a book by Stephen M.R. Covey).
(7/8/20)

Optimism
When a person is nice to someone he disagrees with, there could be several reasons for this but one may be that he forgives them; another may be that he wants to stab them in the back. So, be cautiously optimistic. Treat your Trust like gold.

Resources and Love
Let's say there are 3 couples.
One couple consists of a spendaholic and an enabler.
The 2nd couple consists of a spendaholic and a money-saver.
The 3rd couple also consists of a spendaholic and a money-saver.
With the 1st couple, the enabler trusts the spendaholic every time he says he will change. Eventually, they lose their retirement savings, never to regain it.
With the 2nd couple, the spendaholic trusts the saver. They grow their retirement savings, although to a slower and lesser degree because of the over-spending.
With the 3rd couple, the spendaholic does not trust the saver, and does not even agree that he himself is a spendaholic. The only way they can grow their retirement savings together, is to separate their finances. This by the way might well save their marriage, as it eliminates the arguments that would ensue over one's money being used for another's purchases.

Relationships and Security
Advice to the young: Be a good-hearted person, knowing that you will be ok and secure without anyone else, but with God in your heart, and then the right person will come to you. You will love that person, but never forget that you would still be secure and ok without them, because God is in your heart. This knowing will affect the relationship positively, while you are in it.

But if the relationship ends, there may be some extreme sadness as you find that the person is no longer right for you. Since God is in your heart, the sadness will not be unbearable – He is there for you. You will come to where you can begin again.

Love and Trust
Trust is a form of expectation, or hope, depending on the degree of it. Trust and love can be intertwined, or they may overlap as in a Venn diagram, but they are not the same thing.

You can *love* someone who isn't perfect. But you can't reasonably *trust* someone 100% of the time who isn't perfect 100% of the time, even when their intentions are golden. And even *this* varies according to the subject. You might trust someone 100% on fidelity, but only 50% with handling your money the way you want it handled.

High Trustworthiness Societies
There are societies with a *stronger* emphasis on trustworthiness, which I believe can have a genetic component. For this type of society to work, you have to be able to tell when people are untrustworthy, which is why I believe guilt, and the expression of it, developed through behavioral genetics.

Guilt makes a person *feel* bad if they do something untrustworthy, so they are less likely to repeat the offending behavior. Guilt *expression* allows others to perceive guilt in the guilty person, so they will know he might not be as trustworthy as before.

But a certain type of guilt expression called *remorse expression*, can indicate to others that the person has an aversion to committing the offense again.

However, when you have a society built on trustworthiness such as this, and for whatever reason, people become *un*trustworthy, that society will crumble. It will crumble unless most of the population wake up and say, "I must readjust the point where I trust." They will have to set a new Point at which Trust must be *Earned* (PTE). In other words, the average citizen will need to become more skeptical about practically *everything*, even the genuineness of someone's remorse, which slows down decision-making, action, and productivity.

I believe cultures generally differ on this PTE and how appropriately they can adjust it. The best situation though is to *maintain* a high trustworthiness culture and not to have to readjust PTE at all.

Culture

When assurances largely become deceptions, the culture may be doomed. If the population continues to put up with this, it is because they lack the courage or intelligence to fight it, or have been truly fooled for whatever reason.

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Big Team, Good Team

When I was little, my Dad used to throw the football to me and call me "Big Team". Little did I know that he may have unwittingly sent me the heart message of America in World War 2: Put aside your differences and work together as one big team.

Today in the U.S., we lack two ingredients to make that happen. The first is a widely held perception of sustained danger (fear) that might motivate us to put our differences aside and fight the common foe.

The second is having enough people in the population that seem to carry a certain mindset that includes predispositions for altruism, trustworthiness, compassion for the innocent, and big picture thought.

But it seems like trustworthiness might be the stickiest glue that holds these ingredients together. The more people around you who are trustworthy, the bigger your team can be.

Now, having said all this about being a big team, we can't forget that historically, a big team is not always a good team. So, on the one hand we can say it's a good thing when a person's mindset, and thus his behavior, promotes the voluntary cooperation of larger and larger groups, as opposed to promoting smaller groups fighting against one another.

On the other hand, we recognize that a large group can be a double-edged sword. For example, Noah did not reject his own principles in order to join the larger group. So, the principles involved, are what determine if a large group is good or bad.

There are certain universal principles that most people can agree on. Unfortunately some people are more influenced by the small and immediate picture as opposed to seeking the long-term big picture, when reaching their definitions of what is good and fair. I think the better definition of "good & fair" is usually arrived at when most of the team members have predispositions for altruism, trustworthiness, compassion for the innocent, and big picture thought. (might put this on substack)

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Time Management and Regulations

It's impossible to document the details of what takes up someone's work day without taking a whole day to

document it. Whether these details were productive, is another matter entirely. But either way, asking them to document much of it, cuts way down on their productivity. So, it might take more time to document what you do, than to do what you do. Even attempting this would then prevent you from doing whatever came next.

The Fruit
Trust without Trustworthiness is what transpired between Adam & Eve and the serpent.

Trustworthiness vs. Deception
In the information age, one increasingly popular tactic is "Complicate and deceive". The number of bytes of information generated by humans has accelerated so rapidly so that no one can have a comfortable knowledge of their immediate world anymore. A 2018 article by Bernard Marr notes: "Over the last two years alone 90 percent of the data in the world was generated." In other words, we are increasingly dependent on others to give us the information we need. And this leaves us ripe for deception.

Words vs. Results
Trust someone based on a long history of their results, not a long history of what they have said, unless what they have said, is backed up by their results.

Differentiation and Intuition
Can I hold it together? Now after decades of trial-and-error learning, being able to see the various components of personality with even clearer delineation and separation, can I simultaneously hold the microscopic view and the orbital view, and guide it all to function in righteousness? The answer is to trust God for my intuition.

Cunning and Cohesion
Which one is more evolved, a society where you can leave your doors unlocked at night, or a society where you cannot? Trustworthiness makes a society greater than cunning does. Yet those who tend to trust, must also be able to spot the cunning. Otherwise, that greater society will crumble. Someone whose name you would recognize, once said: "Be as shrewd as snakes, and as innocent as doves."

The Social Math
Tr/M = C. Trustworthiness over Mindset diversity (in a population) = Cooperation (or Cohesion)
Th/M = C. Threat (perceived) over Mindset diversity = Cohesion (in a population)

Why vs. Trust
Trusting allows us to be glad (thankful) for everything God does. Like the dog at the vet who doesn't understand the pain of the injection (nor would the dog understand the owner's explanation of it), the dog still trusts his owner who is there with him, and the dog's trust prevails over anger. (3/16/21)

Trust in Populations
Throughout history there have been, and will continue to be populations who are more often trusting, and when they interact for many years with populations who are less often trustworthy, they will become diminished until they almost die out. They will either have to adapt by becoming more untrustworthy and deceptive themselves, to equal those with whom they interact, at least selectively, or they will have to find a place where they can live with themselves in a high trust culture, because to the untrustworthy, trust and trustworthiness are simply weaknesses that translate as predictability, which begs to be exploited. (3/23/22)

A.I.
It looks like Artificial Intelligence and Deep Fakes are getting so convincing that it's going to force people back to the way it was 100 years ago with trustworthiness – face to face conversations, and trusting those who my trusted others trust, through word of mouth. (12/20/22) (substack 1/24/23)

AI, 2nd Comment

I read today that one of the initial developers of AI said that AI could generate so much online content, accurate or not, that no one would be able to tell what was accurate any more. I think this will make old books more valuable. Especially history books. (5/2/23) (Substack 5/2/23)

Redefining Words

People may feel sorry for someone who appears to be emotionally hurting. Some may even mistakenly trust that person a little more, because of the popularly felt but unspoken notion of the so-called Righteousness of the Underdog. The person should receive appropriate respect and care, but trust is a separate issue.

The pivotal personality characteristic with "good person trustworthiness" seems not to be how a person feels. Instead, it appears to be "destruction *control*", which may mean "anger *control*" in more emotional people, and "disrespect *control*" in less emotional people. But in both cases, the people who can see in vivid color just how horrible that things could get for them and their loved ones, and how quickly and easily things could get that way, are more motivated to use destruction control.

Destruction control can be difficult to define, like when using violence to stop a violent offender. Or even defining what an offense is, in some cases. But most people agree on what destruction control looks like. And the fact that most people agree most of the time, is what holds us together. However, since we voice our words to work out our differences, those who seek to increasingly *redefine* words, instead of using them as universally understood tools to build our statements, will by default sow the seeds of misunderstanding and disagreement, then anger, disrespect, and destruction. (1/24/23) (might put this on substack)

Blinker

I have been driving for 51 years but there's a trend I have noticed in just the past 10 years. People don't trust your blinker anymore when they're sitting at a stop sign to your right, and you put on your blinker to turn right. I think it's just one indicator that people have been deceived at an alarming rate nowadays. (2/13/23)

Expectation vs. Evidence

How do we decide whether to trust our own judgment about someone? If we don't know them, we usually decide based on the Evidence of what they have said or done. Over time, a pattern emerges. Then for the most part we shift to an Expectation of how they will perform, positive or negative, without having to comb through the pile of microscopic Evidence every time.

People vary on how they consider Evidence, but there are other wrinkles. One is, if we constantly seek our ultimate self-worth from the physical world (and this is easy to slip into), we are more likely to judge people or things based on our Expectation about how our judgment might affect our reputation.

A second wrinkle often happens at work. You might make a judgment about someone or something based on Evidence, like "My manager just broke the rules" or "This software has way too many bugs to be accurate". But you may be obligated to act based on Expectation – the Expectation of the company or government you work for.

For those with a conscience, this causes cognitive dissonance. Many of us cannot just quit our jobs, but we can make efforts to get ourselves out of these high conflict situations. In the mean-time, wear your cognitive dissonance like a badge of honor – that you have enough of a conscience to have cognitive dissonance in the first place. (5/25/23) (Substack 5/25/23)

Learn Before, Not After

You should spend a lot of time and effort learning what a typical trustworthy person is and does, before giving your heart to someone. (4/14/24)

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Evolutionary Psychology and Trust

Looking at how the behavior of other species has evolved, it looks to me like the system of "trust and trustworthiness" that has evolved to different degrees in different humans, may be doomed to at least a setback. It appears that increasingly people are trusting the untrustworthy in the U.S..

In animals, major survival factors have evolved such as trust, deception, strength, speed, numbers, and others. Deception is sometimes manifested by an animal's appearance, but sometimes it is a brain function leading to a deceptive behavior. Trust and trustworthiness are brain functions. Species trust their own more readily than other species. There is infighting in the same species at times, but this often involves direct survival needs such as food, or males fighting over a mate.

Still, it seems that in most all animals, trust-trustworthiness within a species even varies from one individual to the next.

Prehistorically, some wolves trusted humans enough to begin a synergistic relationship, while for some reason, others did not.

I suspect this involves the evolutionary process of genetic mutation regarding brain function in each individual.

Of course, in the wild, an animal that trusts too much will get deceived by the untrustworthy, will pay the ultimate price for it, and will not pass along these trusting genes. So it becomes an advantage for the animal to be able to assess the trustworthiness of another animal.

Some humans trust too much. Can these individuals often be identified by appearance? Is there an inborn predisposition to trust more or less in certain types of people? Not sure if a study has been done yet to answer these questions. I suspect the answer may one day be found in the field of behavioral genetics.

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Trusting Someone's Intentions
If you're wondering whether someone hangs around with you because they enjoy talking with you, or hangs around with you because you spend money on fun things, you might find the occasion to ask "Are you here for me or the activity?"

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Trusting Someone You Don't Know

Don't Skip the Microscope

Let's say you are about to decide on a doctor, or hire someone for your company, or choose someone to work on your car. And you don't know the person yet. Trustworthiness is the issue. But experience has already taught you not to put too much weight on what they say. You have been burned by doing this in the past.

How do you know if they are trustworthy? We might raise one eyebrow and look to the ceiling for the answer, but it is not written up there. I have checked many times. Anyway here are a few questions that many people ask themselves when considering trustworthiness:

Could this person have any **ulterior motives**?
Do I have a **trusted friend** who trusts this person?
Do they have any **info online**, including reviews?
Are they the same **race or gender** as me? (This indicates prejudice, but some people still use it.)
Do they have the same **bedroom preferences** as me? (Also indicates prejudice, but some people still use it.)
What does my **intuition** say?

These questions are nothing new, but let's pop them under the microscope for a minute:

Ulterior Motives: The "motives" factor figures into all of the others. Sometimes we are surprised by what others will do for just a little extra sip from that underground money/power stream. "He seemed so nice..well.." Motives are not evidence, but they can be a sign post that tells you which rock to look under for those hidden trends. Best to have a degree of healthy skepticism - don't get too happy too fast.

Trusted Friends: This method of assessing trustworthiness has been around since before stone tools. Of course it's not infallible and other things come into play, like mob mentality. But generally it's better to have a network of evaluators communicating, rather than each person reinventing the wheel. Trusted friends are great, but life shows us that we won't agree 100% of the time, and sometimes we don't even agree with ourselves.

Online Info and Reviews: These can be faked. Heard of a company called "Reputation Defender"? They help people get rid of bad reviews. Granted, some bad reviews can be unfairly generated by competitors, but you never know how many reviews are fake. Had much luck with Trustpilot, Google reviews, Trip Advisor or Yelp? What about Consumer Reports, Angi, Better Business Bureau, Allsides.com, Amazon reviews, and others? Sometimes they can unveil trends but are best used as only one piece to the puzzle.

Ever taken part in a poll or survey? Then you know what a "leading question" is. "Fact checkers" have also been known to be associated with various leaning groups. Look at both sides of the informational coin. In other words, people who mostly get it right are brave enough to step out of their fuzzy ego investment, take a swim in the opposing views, take a shower, and then decide for themselves.

Race and Gender: You might think "Well if they're the same race or gender as me, then they've been through some issues that I've experienced, that other people don't fully understand. Therefore, I trust they'll be the most helpful to me." Getting back to our original example, deciding who to trust when you are looking for a doctor, or hiring someone, or choosing someone to work on the car - the help you get depends on the relevant issue – Performance in medicine, Performance at your company, or Performance in auto repair.

And Performance is guided by how a person *thinks* about the relevant issues…in their relevant tissues. Since people don't think with their skin or genitals, the relevant tissues here are those ***brain pathways*** *concerned with performance* – Performance in medicine, Performance in your company, or Performance in auto repair. In other words, consider the relevant tissue for the relevant issue.

Bedroom Preferences: Similarly to Race and Gender, consider the ***brain pathways*** *concerned with performance* – Performance in medicine, Performance in your company, or Performance in auto repair. The relevant tissue for the relevant issue.

Intuition: Intuition is a way that your brain gives you a quick feeling about an issue, without having to sift through hundreds of details first. It is simply the back of your mind recalling generally how other similar situations turned out, and then pushing the conclusion into the front of your mind in a single feeling, as opposed to giving you all the details. You might recall some details here and there, but considering *every detail* of every situation would take too long, so intuition sends you this one feeling.

George Carlin revised this George Bernard Shaw quote by adding a third line to it:
"Some people see things that *are*, and ask, *Why*?
Some people dream of things that *never were*, and ask, *Why not*?
Some people have to go to work and don't have *time* for all that."

Intuition is a time saver. But it's not 100% accurate 100% of the time, so consider intuition alongside of some of the other tools above, when trying to peg just how trustworthy someone is.

In general, the more details you consider, the closer you'll get to the truth about someone's trustworthiness. Most everyone is familiar with the old saying, "The devil's in the details." I like old sayings, but that's one I had to revise as follows: The devil's not really in the details, but he wants you to think he is. (7/14/24 with major edit **2/9/26**)

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The Economy
Unfortunately our economy has transitioned to where trustworthiness is no longer the main advantage. Now it is deception. (11-1-24)

Selfish Thankfulness, Selfish Remorse
Different types of thankfulness are associated with different thought patterns, at different times & situations, in different people.
Let's take the thankfulness for being forgiven:
Person A might automatically feel a desire to pay back what he feels is the debt of being forgiven.
Person B might feel it's a debt but the desire to pay it back diminishes quickly.
Person C might not even feel it's a debt.
Likewise for remorse:
Person D feels remorse for committing a crime, and cries during the police interview. Defense attorney uses the crying as evidence that Person D has remorse for the crime & should be given a lighter sentence.
Person E feels remorse for getting caught, and cries during the police interview. Defense attorney uses the crying as evidence that Person E has remorse for the crime & should be given a lighter sentence.
So, don't always assume the usual thought patterns are connected in any given person, until you get to know them over a period of years. And even then, history shows that some are academy award level actors. Bottom line: It should take a lot longer to earn trust, than most people think. (1.2.25)

Incentives
Sometimes I trust people's incentives more than their words. 2-25-25

Some people have a stake in your success, and some people have a snake in your success. So remain vigilant, but not worried. (2/24/26)

End of Chapter "Trust and Trustworthiness"